

**An Enquiry into Fully Lived Moments**

**by**

**Philip Hawkins**

**A thesis submitted to the University of  
Plymouth**

**School of Art and Performance**

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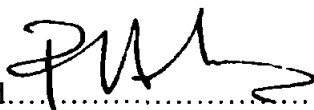
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## **Introduction**

The thesis explores facets of human agency and fully lived moments in the Cobra group, the ideas of Henri Lefebvre, and the ideas of Victor Burgin and psychoanalysis. Connective elements, and their relevance or not, through different disciplines, are a central part of its thinking. To this end some connections are found, some speculative connections are tracked, and there are some ideas that don't connect, yet come close to doing so but which become valuable for the examination of productive tensions and excesses about the lived in a cross-disciplinary enquiry.

To begin with, an original set of historical and thematic alliances is established, that includes Cobra artists and thinkers, and their links, among others, to the Surrealists, Gaston Bachelard, and Henri Lefebvre, who were contemporaries. It includes the relevance of a plurality of productive and collaborative tensions in Cobra practices that de-stabilise a traditional aesthetic reading. In the next chapter, an original reading of Lefebvre's radical romantic ideas, as well as his contacts with art groups, are examined. This includes the Dadaists, Surrealists, ex-Cobra member Constant, and the early Situationists. In combination and in unresolved ways, the Cobra Group's collaborative aesthetic and Henri Lefebvre's radical romanticism encompass particular facets of a realm of human agency and fully lived moments.

In its enquiry for a more contemporary context in art theory the thesis finds scope for a cautious re-consideration of fully lived moments and lived time and for stretching its methodological complexity. Given the propensity of historical material theories to marginalise reflexive insights, and given an existing realm of Victor Burgin's ideas about Lefebvre, art theory, and psychoanalysis, his ideas are investigated and differentiated critically. This helps to highlight the importance of misalignments and problems of equivalence with ideas about fully lived moments. The chapter also highlights differences between: Burgin and Lefebvre; between Burgin's synthetic psychoanalytic realm and other psychoanalytic approaches; and it highlights the limited relevance of Lefebvre's notions of alterity. Other sets of near connections and potential fractures in human agency and dimensional aspects of the lived are explored in object relations and Freudian theory.

This is not an art historical commentary about Cobra art. Its history focuses on a set of productive tensions that destabilise art historical and traditional aesthetic categorisations. However, Cobra practice is not reduced into an outside aesthetic realm, or a thinking vivacity either. Similarly, the thesis magnifies only a portion of Lefebvre's thinking. It presents an original interpretation of Lefebvre's work by putting together a range of ideas, connections and texts about his radical romanticism that highlight the lived



dimension of time. However his ideas about a radical romanticism are not examined as equivalent to art or psychoanalysis but as a set of productive tensions and near connections that address intractable problems about human agency and fully lived moments in important ways. Given an accumulation of connections the literary survey is included at the end, and summarises the principle texts.

Importantly the thesis gives scope to different or unresolved interpretations about the lived in fully lived moments as an investigative practice. In the enquiry, the significance of otherness and of practices is held as a central concern. The lived is investigated not only through its sociological and lived forms, but also mediated and contested by its psychoanalytic and its art forms. It therefore speculates about ideas from across disciplines. The revealing dissonances of practices and actions that go against the grain of the conventional disciplines of art history and political theory emerge from it in an emphasis on art writing, collaborative practices, on particular actions and contexts, and on resonances in the psychoanalytic.

Two terms help to frame the reach of the thesis. Unresolveability is a key term that delineates the bringing together of disparate tensions, contexts, and values in productive ways. This applies, for example in the Cobra Group, to formal elements from a traditional aesthetic considered with materials, ideas

or contexts outside of a traditional aesthetic. Similarly in the radical romantic strains of Lefebvre's work unresolveability highlights a particular set of creative and sociological connections, but also problems. This includes for example the relative strengths of bringing together poiesis (creativity) and praxis (social practice) that Lefebvre, to a certain extent, attempts to resolve as an aspect of social practice. Unresolveability explores its field in aesthetic, visual cultural or radical romantic terms, despite connections – in the everyday and cultural theory for example - as up against the impossible in terms of being resolved into an aesthetic synthesis or dimension.

At its broadest, and for the second term, non-resolveability relates to the intrinsic limitations of equivalence across disciplines in the thesis. Paradoxically the thesis attempts to realise a field of the fully lived moment in thought and action, while also highlighting specific limits and non-resolveable problems of its reach. A cross-disciplinary approach examines the value of bringing together methodologies and specific fields from different directions. It examines productive configurations across disciplinary vectors of thought. Furthermore however its reach highlights notions of contradiction in the lived. It highlights notions of excess that cut across Lefebvre's radical romanticism, Cobra's aesthetic, and Burgin's psychical realms.

The thesis attempts, and complicates, a theory of fully lived moments. For example, in Lefebvre's sociological perspectives and in the psychoanalytic, different registers of thought, value, and agency are highlighted. Given disparate registers, non-resolveability struggles against developing one methodology or field at the expense of others. This becomes a means, in exploratory ways, for tracking connections from disparate mapping processes. Furthermore, scope for the potential reinterpretation of specific concepts and contexts, for discursive and creative thinking across registers, are introduced. The thesis concludes that there is scope for alliances in unresolveable thematic connections between Cobra Art and Lefebvre where an interesting transitional field about the lived is found. It presents the importance and originality of a field of concepts, values and ideas about fully lived moments. Yet it also introduces some of the disparate and non-resolveable scope of its fractures in reflexive or art theoretical realms.

### **Abstract: An Enquiry into Fully Lived Moments by Philip Hawkins**

The thesis explores facets of human agency and fully lived moments in the Cobra group, the ideas of Henri Lefebvre, and the ideas of Victor Burgin and psychoanalysis. Connective elements, and their relevance or not, through different disciplines, are a central part of its thinking. To this end some connections are found, some speculative connections are tracked, and there are some ideas that don't connect, yet come close to doing so but which become valuable for the examination of productive tensions and excesses about the lived in a cross-disciplinary enquiry.

To begin with, an original set of historical and thematic alliances is established, that includes Cobra artists and thinkers, and their links, among others, to the Surrealists, Gaston Bachelard, and Henri Lefebvre, who were contemporaries. It includes the relevance of a plurality of productive and collaborative tensions in Cobra practices that de-stabilise a traditional aesthetic reading. In the next chapter, an original reading of Lefebvre's radical romantic ideas, as well as his contacts with art groups, are examined. This includes the Dadaists, Surrealists, ex-Cobra member Constant, and the early Situationists. In combination and in unresolved ways, the Cobra Group's collaborative aesthetic and Henri Lefebvre's radical romanticism encompass particular facets of a realm of human agency and fully lived moments.

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dimension of time. However his ideas about a radical romanticism are not examined as equivalent to art or psychoanalysis but as a set of productive tensions and near connections that address intractable problems about human agency and fully lived moments in important ways. Given an accumulation of connections the literary survey is included at the end, and summarises the principle texts.

Importantly the thesis gives scope to different or unresolved interpretations about the lived in fully lived moments as an investigative practice. In the enquiry, the significance of otherness and of practices is held as a central concern. The lived is investigated not only through its sociological and lived forms, but also mediated and contested by its psychoanalytic and its art forms. It therefore speculates about ideas from across disciplines. The revealing dissonances of practices and actions that go against the grain of the conventional disciplines of art history and political theory emerge from it in an emphasis on art writing, collaborative practices, on particular actions and contexts, and on resonances in the psychoanalytic.

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## **Volume One**

# **Cobra: the experimental development of new productive tensions and practices outside of a traditional aesthetic**

- Introduction
- The Founding of Cobra: Cobra thinkers, values and history
- Surrealism, Cobra polemicists, and politics
- Provenances of Cobra painting and sculpture
- Bachelard and Cobra's experimental materialism
- Creativity and actions, experimentation, and collaborative artwork
- A Case for the Everyday
- Visual Culture and Creative Methods
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- Situated Collaborative Practices, events, art and architecture
- Situated Collaborations and Post-Cobra
- *footnotes*

**Cobra: the experimental development of new productive tensions and practices outside of a traditional aesthetic.**

**Introduction**

This chapter explores the history of the Cobra group with a particular emphasis. A cluster of concepts is brought together that turn away from an exclusively individual and specialised aesthetic and which develop new productive connections. It does so however by not resolving tensions between them, but by highlighting the relevance of tensions induced by Cobra reconstituting accepted patterns of differentiation within a traditional aesthetic. For example Cobra painting and sculpture are introduced, but so too are the relevance of collective artworks, events, and the conceptualisation of realms outside of a traditional aesthetic. In this totality of productive relations, rather than only in a traditional formal enquiry, a centrally important achievement of Cobra is located.

Cobra polemicists, who were also artists included, primarily, Jorn (from Denmark), Dotremont (from Belgium), and Constant (from Holland). Their roles were central in the founding of the group. They also brought together, along with the other members of the group, a broad range of critical opinions and differences about facets of art and life. Yet there was a shared determination to turn art away from an inward surreal search and an

individual surreal unconscious to realms outside of a traditional aesthetic. There was an underlying interest to explore and experiment with a cluster of connections in art and life in ways that were not already known, or resolved to them. Outside of a traditional aesthetic this included dimensions as wide ranging as anthropology and the commonplace in past and contemporaneous contexts. For example Cobra artists explored facets of folk art and children's art. They explored the values of collaboration, and of Marxism adapted to a field of art, though it was not clear what its adaptation meant.<sup>1</sup> In a post war context, given these developing interests Cobra's optimistic outlook was also defined by an undogmatic, highly experimental, and art-led search for new re-creative processes and values about art and life. However because its thinkers were also all artists as well, it is not always as easy to differentiate theory from practice. A reconsideration of artwork, values and an engagement with their environments, in distinction from the Surrealist's retreat to the surreal unconscious, was important in the group's founding.

Cobra polemics and ideas are not treated as inherently separate domains to its practices. Nor is Cobra artwork interpreted only through a primitivist objectification, but in an experimental and developing set of relations, that include unconventional and collaborative artworks, particular collective practices, and events. Paradoxically Cobra art is not set in a vacuum as scope is given over to its creative values, actions, and particular cultural conditions,

yet nor for the most part are these reducible to a cultural and political dogma either. Cobra art is included in a budding realm of international events and art practice as a form of cultural activism that played a part in bringing the group together. As a result post-Cobra history becomes then, not only pictorial and sculptural but inflected with several histories. By de-stabilising pre-defined aesthetic categories on many different levels it is argued Cobra began to experiment in ways that is difficult to pinpoint only within the terms of a traditional aesthetic.

The chapter engages with unresolved facets of Cobra art history and historiography in interesting ways. Important differences can be gleaned from the existing literature and from the developing terms of a Cobra historiography, specifically about the central achievement of Cobra.<sup>2</sup> Art historian, Willemijn Stokvis concentrates primarily on a Cobra pictorial and sculptural language and its post-Cobra developments. However the formal subtleties of a Cobra pictorial language were not introduced and developed until the 1970s by Stokvis – that is twenty years after Cobra. Yet in simple terms, subsequent differences of opinion by Cobra artists, Constant and Dotremont, with Stokvis, highlighted the problems and interests of an art historical synthesis of ‘Cobra art’. Instead Dotremont highlighted the collective works, and the artistic achievements that were not conventionally painterly ones. Lambert’s book on Cobra published in 1983 was heavily

criticised by Stokvis for representing Dotrement's and the Belgian collective side of Cobra, though Constant, a Dutchman, praised the book. While there were also differences of opinion between Constant and Dotrement about the central achievement of Cobra, they shared an emphasis on the importance of the collective work. Furthermore differences between Constant and Dotrement antedated Stokvis' arrival by some time. Graham Birtwhistle writes: 'It would seem, then, that by 1984 Stokvis stood alone against an alliance of the other main protagonists (Constant and Dotrement).'<sup>3</sup> For Constant, and to a certain extent Jorn, 'Cobra art' was precisely what the group had not created, and they saw art establishments of Holland and Belgium as supporting an on-going 'Cobra art.'

However Birtwhistle writes that Constant, Dotrement and Stokvis all had legitimate disagreements, and that Stokvis later takes account of Constant's and Dotrement's point of view, though this does not conceal the fact that opposing claims have been made by each of them. Therefore it is fair to say that the comprehensiveness of a traditional aesthetic language to define Cobra art is to a certain extent an an-going and important contested element in Cobra historiography, especially given its rebuttal by Cobra members. Birtwhistle considered, in 1988, problems of historiography and the relevance of realms outside of a pictorial and individual aesthetic, for example the connections with collaborative activities, international events

and a realm of the urban after Cobra that has implications for reconsidering the trajectories of post-Cobra history.<sup>4</sup> These fractured strands in post-Cobra history are referred to by the trajectories of Constant and Jorn in the Hayward catalogue about a Cobra exhibition. Scope for a similar strand of a reconsidered historiography is developed in the final section of this chapter about the significance of collaborative events, international activities, and art and architecture in Cobra and post Cobra.

The chapter then does not attempt to resolve tensions or historiographical differences within the group. The unresolveability of tensions within Cobra art both in its formal experimentation and its productive connections outside of traditional realms is held as an important facet of the depth of the Cobra enquiry. Inevitably describing Cobra in these terms separates out important individual talents, and specific formal considerations. However, 'The differing concerns within Cobra seem to have co-existed in a state of tension which, in conformity with the dialectical-materialist views of the leading theorists of Cobra, might best be characterised as dialectical. Dialectics do not deal with harmonious relationships, rather with fruitful conflicts.'<sup>5</sup> A range of productive or conflicting tensions, processes, and contexts instead, that were a central part of Cobra's experimentalism is highlighted. So the provenance of its pictorial language is introduced briefly, but so too are emerging ideas and contexts. These include an interest in ideas about

materiality and the forming of images in Gaston Bachelard and it includes an interest in the ideas about the everyday by Henri Lefebvre, both of whom were Cobra's contemporaries. The meeting of these ideas helps understand a facet of an emerging and experimental field in Cobra art that is demonstrable and that is developed in original ways.

### **Introduction of Cobra Group:**

Cobra was formed in Paris, November 8, 1948. That is only a few years after the Second World War. Groups principally from three countries - and personalities within them - were brought together under the Cobra acronym, the first letters of Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam respectively. Each of the three centres was to be influential in Cobra's short history at different times, partly reflecting the differing maturity of their pre-Cobra orientations.<sup>6</sup> However writing in terms of countries, groups, and centres, makes the formation of Cobra sound grander than it probably was. It was also a few personalities and their developing and shared artistic outlooks that got the group together. The three groups were:

- The Surrealist Revolutionary Group from Belgium, led by Christian Dotremont. The Belgians had a significant input on Surrealism. While the painters of Belgian Surrealism were established around the group La Jeune Peinture Belge and its emphasis on decorative abstraction, Cobra emerged

mainly from the militant movements of Belgium Surrealism that was made up of poets and writers.<sup>7</sup>

- The Danish Harvest group (Høst). This was the most established group, in terms of its members having already set up a journal before Cobra (Helhesten) and tapped into a range of extant painterly and theoretical influences, some of them home-grown, for e.g. Danish Abstract Surrealism. For the Danes Cobra was an extension of this movement that had begun in the late 30s.
- The Dutch Experimental Group. Its members were a generation younger than the Danes, and although they developed a style as significant as their Danish counterparts, the Cobra years were for them revolutionary.

Cobra's lifetime was brief; three years. It produced an outpouring of artwork, of individual collaborative, and multi-lingual research in the Cobra magazine, and several European exhibitions (Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, and Paris).<sup>8</sup> Bringing together an assembly of artists and of ideas - artistic, cultural, and political - it was formed loosely into an art movement. That is, 'the Cobra group had only the most rudimentary structure and most of the organisational work was done in informal meetings.'<sup>9</sup> Its first simple manifesto spoke of 'an organic experimental collaboration which avoids all sterile and dogmatic theory.'<sup>10</sup> They worked in painting, sculpture, assemblages, ceramics, prints, word-pictures, murals, collage, and poetry.



They established a journal as well as a stencilled bulletin (*Le petit Cobra*) for keeping in contact with one another. Cobra experimented and played with traditional categorisations of specialisation and of an individual aesthetic - poets worked with artists, painters worked with sculptors. They experimented with an anti-aesthetic that led them to accessible forms of creativity such as folk art and children's art for example. They considered the relevance of lived and creative dimensions of experience in culture and anthropology, or in socio-historical contexts. Scandinavian folk art for example had a specific significance and history for the Danes. Essentially, the Cobra group was a resolutely international, albeit pan European, group of experimental artists, sculptors, poets, researchers and polemicists, that flourished in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The key figures of the group were: Christian Dotremont, poet, picture-poet, polemicist and editor; Asger Jorn, Philosopher-artist, painter, and later, a ceramist; Constant, polemicist and painter; Pierre Alechinsky, lithographer, painter, and Cobra organiser; Heerup, sculpture, assemblagist, and painter; Corneille, painter, occasional poet, and uses texts in his drawings; Appel, painter and sculptor; Sonja Ferlov painter and sculptor, Pedersen, painter.<sup>11</sup>

In editorial terms Dotremont carried much of the workload, with contributions by Jorn and Alechinsky. Theoretically, the principle contributors were Jorn, Constant and Dotremont, and perhaps, in

collaborative and editorial terms, Alechinsky as well. With very differing degrees of involvement the group came to include around 50 artists and writers.<sup>12</sup> Finally the artists' careers were not only contained by the Cobra Group but many went on to have their own separate, and in some cases, successful careers (e.g. Appel, Corneille, Jorn, R. Jacobsen, Heerup). Just how important Cobra was to the different artists, and their interpretation of its significance to them, varies widely. Appel, in interviews, minimises, or dismisses, Cobra. 'Forty years after, everyone starts talking about Cobra again, but I have forgotten it entirely...I didn't know most Cobra painters, except for the Dutch.'<sup>13</sup> For others, Cobra inevitably helped to encourage and bolster some of the artists' own nascent experimental languages. And it developed facets of artwork and collaborative research – for Constant and Jorn for example whose paths were to cross again in the early situationists.<sup>14</sup>

The primary art collections are in Denmark and the Netherlands. Some works from France and Belgium are in private collections (Pierre Alechinsky and Ellen and Jan Nieuwenhuizen respectively). In Denmark the Silkeborg Kunstmuseum houses 'the most important single collection of works by Asger Jorn'<sup>15</sup> as well as works he collected by friends and contemporaries. Other collections in Denmark are: the Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Aalborg, (a substantial holding of Dutch and Danish work); Carl-Henning Pedersen & Else Alfelt Museum, Herning; Jyske Bank A/S, Silkeborg; Louisiana

Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek; and the Vejle Kunstmuseum. In the Netherlands, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam 'has one of the most significant collections of Cobra works, formed at the outset from the original exhibition held there in 1949.'<sup>16</sup> The Gemeentemuseum in the Hague, in addition to its Cobra collection has a collection of Karel Appel drawings. Other museums include the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam (organised the first comprehensive survey of Cobra work in 1966) and the Cobra Museum voor Moderne Kunst. K. van Stuijvenberg owns a significant private collection of Cobra and post Cobra works (about 500 works)<sup>17</sup>. There are only a few lithographs, a copy of Cobra 1 (in the British Museum), and a handful of paintings in the UK, as well as a collection in private hands (Peter Shield).

There are many different contributions to Cobra Art. They are pictorial. There are also significant contributions from poets and a considerable output of 3-dimensional work, not just sculpture.<sup>18</sup> Cobra was not a monolithic group; it had informal and contested identities. 'Since the movement stood for free expression and claimed to enforce no one stylistic identity, its unity was fragile.'<sup>19</sup> Appel was more interested in making and showing art than in theorising about it. Although he was also at the conference just before Cobra's founding. For Heerup, the studio was his art. Dotremont thought the key to Cobra's success was its experimentalism and 'the way artists and

writers had mixed and swapped disciplines, while for Constant, the real achievement of Cobra lay in its spirit of liberation. Constant has continued to insist that the primitivist painting of the movement was never a goal but merely a transitional phase *en route* to a yet fuller liberated culture.<sup>'20</sup> Stokvis called the group in the title of her book '*Cobra: The Last Avant-Garde Movement of the Twentieth Century.*' Lambert, another Cobra historian writes: 'Cobra was shaped largely by artists such as Jorn and Constant, who switched repeatedly from the brush to the typewriter, and by Christian Dotremont, who edited Cobra publications...'<sup>'21</sup>

### **The Founding of Cobra and the Second World War**

1948 heralded Cobra. 'Cobra was a desperate plea for freedom.'<sup>'22</sup> In terms of the historical moment the experience of the Second World War, in differing degrees, left its mark. It played a part in shaping some of the individuals' outlooks, and, arguably, their shared sensibilities about the purposes and priorities of art. The Nazis occupied each of the Cobra countries; each of the Cobra members was affected differently. Constant was born and bred in Amsterdam, and among the Cobra countries, 'the Netherlands would be the country where the Nazis claimed the most victims.'<sup>'23</sup> Lambert says future members of Cobra had to go underground to avoid deportation or forced labour. In the winter of 1944, when Constant was 20, there was a deliberately provoked famine - 'Constant remained for ever marked by that period and

war would return to haunt his works – the Korean war, then Vietnam.’<sup>24</sup> Recounting Corneille’s childhood garden in Liege that was destroyed in the war, Lambert says: ‘Somewhere in Corneille’s childhood there was a garden: he would remain nostalgic for it throughout his entire life and never stopped dreaming of once again finding himself a child in a garden, of seeing and painting the world and nature as a garden seen through the eyes of the child within him, which he so dearly wished to preserve.’<sup>25</sup> In the series of lithographs and a prose poem in 1962 about the garden, ‘are to be found all the thematic and ontological keys of Corneille’s work...but this garden was destroyed by the war; even today, Corneille has anxious memories of those black years.’<sup>26</sup> After the liberation from the Nazis Corneille came to ‘destroy what he had painted in those anguished famine ridden conditions, pictures dominated by funereal colours, whose destruction was part of his own personal ‘liberation’.’<sup>27</sup>

Tajiri, as a Japanese-born American citizen, and member of Cobra, was first interned by the Americans and then fought with them in the Second World War. He made several pieces about the war - ‘Scorched Earth’, ‘Wounded Knee’ saying, ‘for a soldier at war, the earth is his best friend.’<sup>28</sup> Zulu artist, Ernest Mancoba, husband to another Cobra member Sonja Ferlov, and a black British citizen living in Europe, was interned by the Nazis.<sup>29</sup> A peripheral influence on Cobra painting was Atlan who, in Paris, ‘in order to

escape the Gestapo had himself admitted to Sainte-Anne Hospital, where he painted among the inmates.' Later meeting with Cobra members, Atlan imparted his experiences to them; 'in their common quest for an uninhibited art form, pictures painted by psychopaths would be much prized.'<sup>30</sup> Interestingly Jorn also - though not necessarily because of the war - 'had become interested in mental illness, which he studied at the psychiatric hospital at Roskilde.'<sup>31</sup> Although not a member of the communist party during the occupation of Denmark, he did publish the communist party's underground newspaper, Land and People.<sup>32</sup> Appel's series on 'Questioning Children' had 'been prompted by the sight of starving children on railway platforms as he travelled across a war-devastated Germany to Denmark.'<sup>33</sup> Ophobning (Accumulation) by Egill Jacobsen, was a painting more than any other that influenced the change of direction towards a new spontaneous Danish idiom in 1938 and 'can be said to mark the emergence of a specifically Danish Art.'<sup>34</sup> It can loosely be defined as abstract surrealism, or 'spontaneous colourism' as fellow artist Asger Jorn described it, yet Jacobsen's painting itself 'was seen as a Danish version of Guernica.'<sup>35</sup> Jacobsen 'recalled that the picture was painted during the anxiety caused by the menace of Hitler, the annexation of Austria and the threat to Czechoslovakia.'<sup>36</sup> Dotremont wrote: 'Jacobsen elicits so many influences, responses, questions, starting points, props or sedimentations. All at once, like when one is about to die, all his sources flash through his mind, all the

easy ones, all the hard ones.'<sup>37</sup> In a PhD study about Cobra Williamson writes 'Cobra artists themselves, and Cobra scholars generally agree that the group would probably not have formed if the war had not occurred and so created an unsettled post-war Europe.'<sup>38</sup>

Given this context, the relevance of socio-historical conditions and the value of creative actions could not but be important to Cobra. It fostered a meeting of art with the outside world, where new priorities, actions, and arguably individual responsibilities, were introduced. The extremity of Cobra's post-war contexts however was not simplified into a political dogmatism. Theirs was an art-led investigation that built on a traditional aesthetic but also came to include connections with cultural and collective realms outside of a traditional aesthetic. Egill Jacobsen before Cobra's founding expressed 'his ideas on the relationship between art and society and on the situation of the creative individual in the bosom of collective history many times.' In the Linien exhibition catalogue of 1939 he wrote '...As artists, we will collaborate with those who work to make man happier and richer, materially and intellectually. We are not spectators, indifferent to invisible tragedies.'<sup>39</sup> Bille in Cobra 7 wrote 'In the end, it is the evidence and power of the lived which pass into the brush, into the painters colours, into the sculptor's medium...And to live a vision and to create it on the canvas are not two separate acts.'<sup>40</sup>

After the war, creative protest, history and war was one of a number of foci for Jorn and Constant. They reacted forcefully to the atmosphere of the cold war and to the outbreak of future wars, the Korean War in 1950 for example, producing a series of powerful personal responses to it. Constant, who was the most ideologically trenchant of the Cobra group, produced a series of Lithographs entitled '8x la Guerre' in 1951.<sup>41</sup> 'Here Constant employed some of Picasso's motifs – the wounded horse, the broken wheel, the wounded Dove.'<sup>42</sup> Similarly Jorn created a series of War Visions: 'The Pact of the Predators', 'The Burning City', 'The Scavengers', and 'The Bereaved', exhibited in Copenhagen in 1950.<sup>43</sup> In addition there was his eagle imagery series, 'the Eagle's Share' painted before the Korean War. 'These visions arose out of a premonition of war, but they also had a personal basis.'<sup>44</sup> That is, in a period of illness. Lambert writes that these war paintings 'were comparable to canvasses Constant was painting at that time.'<sup>45</sup> Finally Jorn's series of six historical pictures painted from 1949-50 also reflect 'Jorn's interest in the drama of history.'<sup>46</sup> The Aganak series reference America sardonically such as 'the Cantata of the Sun Swine 1950.'<sup>47</sup> The Aganaks are sometimes referenced to as planes,<sup>48</sup> the lower half of an eagle depicted with 'a horde of troops like a troop-carrying aircraft or juggernaught.'<sup>49</sup>



However, by contextualising Cobra within the Second World War there is a risk of generalisation - of depicting a simple oppositional or deterministic narrative. Each of the three countries' members was not just affected differently by the war, artists were also from different generations. Inevitably their outlooks and experiences were also very different. The war then was one of a set of determining influences, albeit an important one, on Cobra's founding. The older artists also had important pre-war practices that built on specific art historical currents - for example the Danish segment of Cobra that took shape before and during the war years. For the youngest members that came to be influential later in Cobra's history the war was not a significant concern in their work. Yet it is difficult to imagine the mixture of Cobra ideas and priorities without the context of the war. Lambert refers to Sandberg, Director of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and organiser of the first major Cobra exhibition: 'Sandberg reminds us that Cobra was born of a particular set of historical circumstances – those of the aftermath of the second world war. This should not be overlooked, since it gives the works their stamp of authority...The life story of Cobra is inscribed in a historical perspective which must be kept in sight in order to understand the whole.'<sup>50</sup>

The historical perspective highlights the emerging presence of new values and connections in the Cobra enterprise, that were not fixed and that differed within the group. However as it will become apparent there was also

something significantly different for example between Cobra's interest in the primitive and Picasso's. Cobra's internationalism fused together outlooks and actions in common. The historical moment generated a tangible sense of what was to be opposed: 'their internationalism contained on the one hand, a reaction against the destructive nationalism and racism of the Hitler years, and, on the other hand, a counter to the perceived narrowness of Bourgeois taste and opinion.'<sup>51</sup> Furthermore 'When in 1940, for instance, Asger Jorn and Egill Jacobsen attacked those who would not acknowledge that 'a good Negro sculpture is just as worthy as a good Greek statue', it was the politics of culture that concerned them.'<sup>52</sup> They emphasised an 'absence of racial prejudice', an 'openness to the cultural riches of other peoples,' and 'a freedom from 'bourgeois "Culture."'<sup>53</sup> In 1948, Dotremont even fantasised about a Hindu issue of their periodical.<sup>54</sup> The group's outlook was marked by an optimism, and not by critical withdrawal, by a simple oppositionality or by existentialism. It was marked by an engagement in experimental artwork and in broad terms in the politics of culture that was different from a traditional aesthetic. 'First and foremost we are optimists' Brands, a Cobra artist wrote in a short piece on the back cover of the first issue of Reflex.<sup>55</sup>

Cobra was loosely defined by a critical stance following the Second World War. Although in Cobra's boldest historical assertions, besides the sawdust and paint of the studio work, Cobra ideas and events reflected an art-led

search for new re-creative values and forms. They reflected an engagement with a broader cultural field outside of the studio and with a set of values together with traditional formal connections. Jorn talked about the rehumanisation of the artist and of society. In the context of putting together the *Helhesten* journal during the Danish occupation, that was the Danish Cobra's predecessor, and that included future Cobra members, Dahlmann Olsen said: '...external pressures increased the internal need in the artists concerned to clarify on the one hand the very sources of aesthetic activity and on the other the human values to which their own creations appealed.'<sup>56</sup> At one extreme Constant, whose radical political views were not shared by the group, wrote radically about 'Liberation' rather than 'Revolution,' the spirit of Dadaism and Surrealism, and called for an end to 'individualist culture.'<sup>57</sup> However he also wrote that this new aesthetic 'will be awakened by an art which makes suggestions but does not spell anything out, an art which awakens and foresees the association of images.'<sup>58</sup> Jorn was later to say, the goals of art were not predetermined: they belonged to the future – He asked 'What is the importance of experiment in art? It is both essential and intangible...like yeast to dough.'<sup>59</sup>

### **Surrealism, Cobra polemicists, and politics**

Significant strands of Cobra emerged out of a breaking away from the Surrealist-led enquiry that predominantly focussed on the unconscious,

automatism, and a gradual separation from the political realm. The Surrealists had actively opposed the Riff War in Morocco in the 1920's, along with the philosophie group that included Henri Lefebvre, and become a more politicised movement than the Dadaists before them.<sup>60</sup> However André Breton, back from America after the Second World War, 'published the manifesto *Rupture Inaugurale*, which rejected all forms of collaboration by the Surrealists with the Communist party,' in June 1947, and he condemned artists for their political collaboration.<sup>61</sup> This overt moving away from the political and social realm by the older generation of the Surrealist movement, left a vacuum for those artists re-evaluating the contexts or values of art. André Breton, unlike members of the Cobra group, had left Europe during the Second World War. 'The gap thus created between Breton and those Surrealists who had experienced the war first-hand proved impossible to bridge in those post war years.'<sup>62</sup> A Surrealist Revolutionary group was temporarily set up both in Belgium and in France in response. 'This Surrealism can be seen as a form of international resistance to the doctrinaire, esoteric, post-war type surrealism led by Breton.'<sup>63</sup> They published a manifesto in July 1947 '*La cause est entendue*' (the case is heard) as a protest and concluded 'That there is no point to the Surrealist experiment unless it was based on dialectical materialism.'<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless some of the terms of the Cobra enquiry resulted from a dialogue, rather than a complete break, with surrealism. The fact that some of the pre-Cobra members, Dotremont for example, despite breaking away from an orthodox surrealism, still called themselves Surrealists, meant they were still sympathetic to elements of it. In some similar terms then, Cobra can be seen as a development of a Surrealist aesthetic framework. Constant also incorporated elements of Surrealism into his manifesto's framework of counter-cultural art: 'In 1924 the Surrealist Manifesto appeared, revealing a hitherto hidden creative impulse – it seemed that a new source of inspiration had been discovered.' The Surrealist's concentration on the surreal unconscious was not excluded as such but replaced by an emphasis upon the childlike, on spontaneous expression and on material experimentation. The Surrealist emphasis on automatism had been an attempt by them to develop some of Freud's ideas, though Freud 'professed complete bewilderment at what the Surrealists were trying to do.'<sup>65</sup>

The Surrealist emphasis on automatism, ('a technique giving access to creativity to everyone'<sup>66</sup>) though not discarded, was effectively replaced in Cobra art by a more expressionist impulse. 'Automatism...became the pre-eminent method for this generation. The only difference was that the term 'automatism' was replaced by spontaneity.'<sup>67</sup> For example Jorn put experiment and spontaneity in the place of psychic automatism. 'So psychic

automatism is linked organically to physical automatism.'<sup>68</sup> However 'Dotrement also advocated automatism, but with reservations' adding that 'there are degrees of success in automatism.'<sup>69</sup> In formal terms, opposition to the Surrealists helped to define Cobra. In the journal *Cobra 1* Jorn, though he met Breton in Paris before the founding of Cobra, criticised Surrealism and Breton's definition of psychic automatism from Breton's First Manifesto in 1924 stating 'one cannot express oneself in a purely psychic way; the act of self expression is a physical act which embodies thought.'<sup>70</sup> Ideas about automatism were important for reintroducing a realm of thought and art. The Surrealist abandonment to automatism had been rejected by the Danish Pre-Cobra group, Linien, as far back as 1934 with important implications: 'We will not combat reason, which is a part of our being. That would be coercion. Neither will we combat imagination, which is another part of our being. That would be coercion to just as high a degree. For an artist today, in an artistically chaotic time, reasoned orientation, analytical work, is a necessity. But in the instant of creation we will not dissolve and dissect imagination, that would lead to absolute sterility.'<sup>71</sup>

Dotrement, an experimental poet, who modelled himself on Rimbaud, emerged from the world of Belgian Surrealism, that was made up principally of poets, a painter - Magritte, and a collagist, E.L.T. Mesens. Its outlook did not necessarily coincide with that of Breton and his friends in Paris, though

there were tensions in the Belgian group. It was here that he met the poet Marcel Havre, the painter Pol Bury, and the photographer Raoul Ubac all of whom later participated in Cobra. Cobra came to reject Magritte's imagery in favour of a more plastic and material imagery and rejected Breton's strand of orthodox Surrealism in Paris. It was while in Paris during the occupation that Dotremont met Picasso.<sup>72</sup> He also met Bachelard before the founding of the Cobra group.<sup>73</sup> This led to a second important thread in Cobra's development, at least certainly for the polemicists and artists Jorn, Constant and Dotremont, and for a few other artists in Cobra as well. Ideas and practices around materialism were one of the principle bases for a critique of Surrealism. The International Conference on Revolutionary Surrealism in October 1947 was crucial for the meeting of Cobra's future members who took their own different view. It was also after the conference that the possibility of links with a Czechoslovakian group, who attended the conference, was lost.<sup>74</sup> It was here Jorn in a speech argued for 'labours' not art 'works', discussed the Danish influences of Egill Jacobsen and Carl-Henning Pedersen. Significantly 'He ended his speech with what amounted to a call for common action where political preoccupations were put into second place, and this would be the essential difference between Revolutionary Surrealism and Cobra...'<sup>75</sup>

A review was published about it, 'Le Surréalisme Révolutionnaire,' March 1948, with the editorial by Dotrement. He wrote a defence of the experimental spirit and to defend or legitimate it he evoked Bachelard and Piaget and also referred to the value of scientific experimentation. 'Moreover, a simple glance at science and technology's latest progress is enough to situate the experimental spirit outside of a sort of purely historical *primitive category*, without recurrence.' <sup>76</sup> Lambert writes 'There was in this an idea which was dear to Jorn, too, and he would later develop it in his methodology.'<sup>77</sup> A counter conference was called by the more orthodox surrealists, who claimed to hold the avant garde mantle, and established 'The International Centre for the Documentation of the Art of the Avant Garde' in Paris in 5-7 November 1948. Jorn, the only Dane, Dotrement, and a young Belgian poet Noiret, the Dutch, Constant, Corneille, and Appel all attended. But they realised, while they had moved towards Surrealism, they did not speak the same language as those in Paris. Noiret later said 'The Surrealism we knew had been halted by the war and what we thought we could start again in the post war conditions.'<sup>78</sup> He said: 'In Paris, Surrealism was a sort of past which was being kept alive. We realised we wouldn't find what we were looking for in Paris. Too much intellectualism, too much theory...'<sup>79</sup> The next day November 8<sup>th</sup> in a café, in a text that expressed firm opposition to the conference, Cobra was, as Dotrement said, sort of organised.



Surrealism's decline after the Second World War, in broader art historical terms, also came to be reflected in a geographical change that saw America eclipse Paris and Europe, as the significant haven for new art movements. 'Art histories predominant narrative transports modern art, during and immediately after the war, directly from Paris to New York, leaving artists working in smaller European cities in the shade.'<sup>80</sup> This shift, in one sense, suggests something of the significance of the new ideas that succeeded them in America, and Jackson Pollock. Another contributory factor was the vacuum that was left in Europe by Surrealism after the Second World War. Yet finally it can also suggest some of the art historical oversights of the shift of post-war art activity to America: 'The English speaking world is especially in thrall to this version of events.'<sup>81</sup> Yet the Hayward catalogue published in 2003 begins its preface with: 'This is the first major exhibition in Britain on Cobra, a surprising fact considering the importance of the movement and Britain's geographical proximity to the three countries, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands.'

### **The Provenance of Cobra painting and sculpture**

In formal terms both before and after the war, Surrealist formulations were being re-assimilated and challenged with important implications for painting. 'As early as 1934...a number of Danes had already renounced 'orthodox surrealism' and spoke out in favour of spontaneous expression. It was only

after 1939 that they dared to actually indulge in it.'<sup>82</sup> Wilhelm Petersen, who practised a fusion of surrealist and abstract art, and had been a pupil at the Bauhaus under Kandinsky, and the sculpture Ejler Bille, were two important figures in what the former later described as 'the true point of departure for Cobra art.'<sup>83</sup> Cobra art came to include a mixture of Primitivism, Expressionism and Surrealism. There were important links with Kandinsky, Klee, and Miró, and with L'Art Brut of Jean Dubuffet. As well as opposing the then current trend of geometric abstraction in Paris, Cobra artists 'wanted to break away from French Surrealism, which in their view was too absorbed in theorising, and which had, in the visual arts, championed a sterile form of aesthetics.'<sup>84</sup>

Art Historian, Stokvis describes Cobra as 'The Last Avant-Garde Movement in Modern Art'. She writes 'Its predecessors were first and foremost the series of movements, starting with futurism, that cast heavily idealistic (quasi-political) messages into the world predicting a new future for society.'<sup>85</sup> In formal terms at least, Cobra moved away from the formalism of the West to so-called 'primitive expression.' Yet they also '...like many of their generation, (were) deeply moved by the expressive force of the irrational forms and colours of that primitive art. (Around 1910 this also happened with the French Fauvists and Cubists and with the German expressionists, who constituted the first wave of Expressionism in the

twentieth Century.)' She then says 'The second great wave of twentieth century expressionism, of which Cobra was a part and which can be summarised as 'Informal Art', came about during and just after the Second World War, virtually everywhere on the basis of and in response to Surrealist movements.'<sup>86</sup>

'Cobra's...origins are to be found in a process in which a clearly expressionist method breaks away from a surrealist background.'<sup>87</sup> Cobra replaced a surrealist naturalism with an expressionistic and materialistic idiom, while maintaining an experimental and image-based aesthetic. As Constant made plain 'We condemn all art which calls itself Surrealist and which depends on the old naturalistic methods.'<sup>88</sup> Dotremont claimed that not finishing a work was the best way to ensure its survival - 'We never permit ourselves to finish a poem...to finish it to begin it, to insert it in space like a cloud...And this is precisely what Jorn was to say about painting'.<sup>89</sup> Formal concerns about plasticity, naturalism and perspective gave way to an informal expressivity and material experimentation. According to Corneille 'We have paint, we have canvas, a couple of brushes and then we start. Other than that we don't want to think about anything. A painting has rights too, you know. I would go even further: a painting is created but it has a voice of its own and it creates us too.'<sup>90</sup>

A Cobra pictorial language developed on a number of levels. It was the result of a confrontation with each other's work, first in painting and then in the plastic arts, especially between the Dutch and the Danes. In formal terms the artistic provenances are diverse, and frequently specific to the different geographical groupings within Cobra - Danish abstract art for the Danes for example. For the Belgians it was *La Jeune Peinture Française* - who included Bazaine, Pignon, and Estève and whose work was moving towards decorative abstraction – which influenced *La Jeune Peinture Belge*. However Cobra in Belgium emerged from a more militant movement within Belgian Surrealism, that primarily included writers. Nonetheless the Cobra groups major painterly influences ranged from Picasso, the North European Expressionism of Munch and Nolde to the paintings of Miro, Kandinsky, and Klee. It included elements from Surrealism and Primitivist expressionism to the paintings of Dubuffet and art informel. In formal terms Cobra artists shared similar concerns about the post war European art scene, especially the exclusively introspective and surreal emphasis on the unconscious.

In the paintings of Corneille, Heerup, Thommsen, Alfelt, and Jorn an imaginative natural world in the form of animals, landscapes, gardens and figures plays an embryonic role. Corneille, part of the Dutch group, expressed this in his world of birds, fish, flowers, trees and stones, and in his exuberant longings of seeing and painting the world and nature as a garden.<sup>91</sup>

Later his paintings turned to the city as a garden, reflecting his own childhood memories, and Dutch geography.<sup>92</sup> Stokvis maintains 'Jorn created a mysterious vegetative world in those years following the war, a world in which countless tiny mythical creatures take shelter.'<sup>93</sup> Jorn was to ask 'Where does the artist find the vitality he expresses? In nourishing himself on the life of nature...'<sup>94</sup> Gauging a sense of Jorn's artistic goals, he wrote: 'The nature of art is not to imitate the external forms of nature (naturalism) but to create natural art.'<sup>95</sup> Heerup, a Cobra sculptor, explained that 'A block of stone was a piece of nature'<sup>96</sup> and 'Art was grafted nature', appropriate to the setting of his sculpture garden that combined 'earthly paradise and something of the scrap merchants yard (see illustrations).'<sup>97</sup> Heerup worked according to the rhythms of the seasons, and was described as 'analogous to Chagall (or Rousseau) among the cubists.'<sup>98</sup> Pedersen, as a Dane, was part of a very different landscape tradition and experience of physical geography to that of the Dutch. He belonged to the world of a mythical nature, of vast landscapes and of Scandinavian artists' expressionistic relationships with it, Munch and Nolde among them.

Else Alfelt, although criticised by some of the Dutch members of the group for being too abstract, sublimated her participation in the life of nature.<sup>99</sup> She had flirted with social realism, encouraged by her meeting with Bertold Brecht who was in exile in Denmark, but she then directed herself towards an



Henry Heerup, *The tortoise*, 1950. Granite  
(50 x 135 cm). Private collection.



Henry Heerup, *Death, the Reaper*, 1943.  
Assemblage of wood and metal. Height 75 cm.  
Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek. Museum  
photo.





Henry Heerup's garden at Rodovre in 1960. Photo Tage Nielsen.

Heerup is walking in his sculpture garden. Green moss fills the cracks in the stones. He walks slowly, going from one to the other, his finger pointing, but painfully, very pink, covered with a plaster. Enter the visitor.

– Are you hurt?

– No, I put a dressing on to remind myself. They have invited me. I have to send all my sculptures to Venice.

The following year. Heerup in his garden. It is winter. Minus ten. A

woollen cap, round glasses, a large unbuttoned coat, oilskin trousers, shiny boots with wooden soles. He taps on a stone. Enter the visitor.

– Well, you must be pleased with that exhibition. I heard it was successful for you. Well done again.

– No, it was terrible. They took all my sculptures. I'll never see them again. Before, when I sold one in Copenhagen or roundabout, I would go and see it now and again on my bicycle. It was near. Now, they're gone. Far away. I'll never see them again. It's terrible.'

(Pierre Alechinsky: *Titres et Pains perdus* ('Lost titles and loaves'), Paris, 1965).

abstraction and an influence of music and rhythms which was close to Kandinsky.<sup>100</sup> 'I am a part of space. My paintings are a lyrical perception of the world.'<sup>101</sup> One of her earlier best pictures was entitled 'The universal green, or mountain landscape,' 1943. In 1960, although some time after the demise of Cobra, her major retrospective in Copenhagen was called 'Poem to the full moon,' where 'forms were swept away in a vast spiral movement.'<sup>102</sup> Similarly Gudnason, the Nordic member of Cobra, 'like Else Alfelt, it was 'the experience of nature' which was his source of inspiration.'<sup>103</sup> Theo Wolvecamp is described as 'a man of pools, the woods, the marshes, of frosty, fantasmagorical mornings.'<sup>104</sup> Eric Ortvad's are imaginative landscape paintings, or vegetative – see vegetation 1948.<sup>105</sup> Stokvis says about Cobra's forms 'appearing to be an interim form between man, animal and plant...could be interpreted as a symbol of desire within the Cobra movement for man to simply be absorbed once more, like animal and plants, into the domain where his origins lie, in nature.'<sup>106</sup> This therefore was an element of Cobra's romanticism.

For the Dutch artist Appel his paintings figure the child-like, dogs, cats, birds, men and animals, often against a vague background, or one that is hazy or extremely dark - see 'The Cry of Freedom' 1949, or 'Little Donkey' (see illustration). After 1945, Picasso, Matisse, and Pignon were of great significance to him, though challenging aesthetic codes was also important to





Appel, *The little donkey*, 1949. Oil on canvas (70 × 155 cm).  
Collection. This painting was shown at the First International  
Cobra Experimental Art, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 3–28 November 1949.

Appel.<sup>107</sup> While his 'Composition with Animal Figure 1951', begins to figure some of his future directions (see illustration). However it was after Cobra that Appel attracted more international interest. His forms become 'more demonic and deluged by matter.'<sup>108</sup> In contrast motion and joy fascinated Corneille. 'A world of good-natured creature crowds into his compositions: birds and fishes fly around, and animals and child people with gigantic balloon heads move through an imaginary space, summoned up in swift, nervous lines and delicate patches of colour.'<sup>109</sup> The first years after liberation he was influenced by Pignon, and then Paul Klee and Miro.<sup>110</sup> His images were filled with travelling and water – see 'Summer' 1948, 'The Bird and Flowering Earth' 1949, and 'African Village' (see illustration). The city as a subject emerges during the Cobra years and Stokvis says after Cobra the earth and 'the city motif plays a major role.'<sup>111</sup> Circular balloon-heads, Stokvis writes, become in the city paintings, plazas or a sun, 'The Joyful City' 1949 and 'The Suburb' 1950 for example.

Constant's painting's held a fascination for the child-like, 'absurd man-like creatures and ghostly animals, mostly of an aggressive character...' and there are visions of war. 'Terror and fear came increasingly to the fore in the forms and subjects that start to dominate his work in 1950' (See '8 Times War' (8 lithographs) 1951 – (see illustration) or 'Mother and Child' 1951. He was



43 Karel Appel  
*Composition with animal figure, 1951*





73 Corneille, *Summer (Été)* 1948, oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm, signed and dated lower left. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

74 Corneille, *The Sailor's Return (Le retour du marin)* 1949, oil on canvas, 70 x 50 cm, signed and dated lower centre. Private Collection, Amsterdam.

75 Corneille, *The Port in the Head (Le port en tête)* 1949, watercolour, ink, collage of newspaper on paper, 48 x 37 cm, signed and dated lower centre. Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam, The Netherlands.

76 Corneille, *The Joyous Rhythm of the City (Le rythme joyeux de la ville)* 1949, oil on canvas, 58.5 x 49 cm, signed and dated lower left. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.









Constant  
8 x la guerre, 1951  
8 x the war



Constant *Festival of sadness*, 1949. Oil on canvas (85 × 110 cm).  
Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam. Photo Victor E. Nieuwenhuys-  
A. van den Born, Amsterdam.

initially influenced by Picasso and the German Expressionists of Die Brücke, before meeting Jorn and his Danish set of influences.<sup>112</sup>

Cobra paintings are raw and experimental. At times they are child-like in their simplicity and emotional directness. Gloom and rawness of Jorn's paintings sits side by side with joyous and child-like qualities of Corneille. A raw insistence on a spontaneous world was wrought by them. The group prioritised 'spontaneity of expression and to this end found inspiration in child and primitive art.'<sup>113</sup> They celebrated 'a return to an original creative impulse...(and) a declaration of freedom from artistic convention'.<sup>114</sup> The Danes typify Cobra's painting language. Their pictorial language was, after all, the most influential in Cobra to begin with. The Danish style 'is characterised by a direct, improvisational way of working, generally with bright, unmixed colours, applied...in patches of colour bound together as a whole by either a few clear lines or many tangled lines.'<sup>115</sup> Miró was an example. Cobra's was a nascent aesthetic. It was neither figurative, the surreal or the abstract. There was no perspective, or realism. It was an un-forming of images through a vibrant expressionism. The paintings are emotionally expressive, demonic or joyful, child-like. There is a sense of the being-formed - of fantasy and play. 'Within the compositions of coloured areas and lines, fantasy creatures are visible, often appearing to be an interim between man, animal and plant.'<sup>116</sup> The images convey a disorientation of



form, an overt wariness of pre-existent form, yet developed through a process-based formal language. The languages of colour, composition and form, are held in tension, subverted rather than refined highlighting the incomplete, and the experimental.

Carl Henning Pedersen's paintings are bright, with simple forms. He is seen as the 'Hans Christian Andersen of Danish Painting.'<sup>117</sup> 'Pink Sun', is clearly closer to an expressionistic rather than any abstract idiom. It is child-like, mythological and imaginative. Similarly 'Light Red Sun.'<sup>118</sup> Asger Jorn's 'La Lune et les Animaux' (The moon and the animals – see illustration) 1950 and the 'Eagles Share' are haunting and instinctive<sup>119</sup>. The Eagles share is also politically critical. While Jorn's style had changed from earlier Miro-influenced paintings, according to Stokvis, he would find more freedom in the paint itself after Cobra.<sup>120</sup>

In Belgium, Dotremont was primarily a writer during Cobra and treated his script as a pictorial and compositional element. Alechinsky's paintings were 'Walk on the Beach' (Family walk on a Sunday Afternoon) 1949, 'The Table is Served' 1949, and 'The Bombing' 1950. He was interested in script and calligraphy. Painters in Belgium, who found some kinship with Cobra and were influenced by Bazaine and Pignon in France, included Louis van Lint and Jan Cox.<sup>121</sup> Alechinsky 'tended strongly towards this style in the Cobra



Asger Jorn  
*La lune et les animaux*, 1950  
The moon and the animals





102 Lucebert  
*Orpheus en de dieren*, 1952  
Orpheus and the animals

years.’<sup>122</sup> Alechinsky’s style was highly influenced by van Lint although these were trends that the Dutch and the Danes were attempting to distance themselves from.

Stokvis also writes about Cobra’s use of found objects and materials - ‘That the Cobra artists and their associates enjoyed a more-or-less animistic relationship with their material seems clear...Not just paint but any found object and every kind of material was a potential trigger for the imagination. Dadaists and Surrealists had already explored this terrain, but with their sense of a profound contact with the material the Cobra artists took it a stage further.’<sup>123</sup> Similarly Constant wrote in Cobra 2 ‘As for us, we only find the real source of art in the material. We are painters and materialism is for us, first and foremost, a sensation – sensation of the world and sensation of colour.’<sup>124</sup> Wolvercamp, whose work Dotrement compared with Jorn, said ‘I start with a spot of colour, with the materials. I do not know where I’m going...When I paint, I do not judge what I’ve done- that comes later. What suggests forms and ideas to me is the contact with the materials...’ About the Cobra sculptor Heerup he wrote ‘In his sculptural work, he was able – with no preconceived plan – to surrender himself entirely to the material...’<sup>125</sup> Heerup explained ‘A block of stone is a Piece of Nature. That is Why it is More than You...’<sup>126</sup> See illustration ‘Woman as Temple’ 1951 for example.





71 Henry Heerup  
*Kvinde som tempel*, 1949-50  
Woman as temple

Not only was this set of insights relevant to single material sculpture, but also to assemblages, found objects, junk sculpture, and their material associations, Picasso being one of the primary influences. Developing the Surrealist's objet trouvé, Ferlov, Bille and Mortensen all 'collected pieces of wood of all shapes and sizes during their long walks along the beach and in the woods, and then created compositions from whatever they had found.'<sup>127</sup> Heerup made junk and rubbish sculpture – skraldemodeller. Appel also made assemblages - see for example 'Rage in the Attic', 1947 made from waste material, including a vacuum hose or his wooden relief, 'Questioning Children' 1949 that was painted. Heerup's sculptures included 'Cobra Bird' in Bronze 1950. Tajiri worked in plaster, clay and welded metal. He also made a series of one-day junk sculptures (see illustration). Some of his exhibited sculptures were in Bronze, 'Warrior' 1949 and 'David and Mrs Goliath' 1949 depict an apparently phallic and mythical female warrior figure (see illustration).

Evidence of Cobra as a substantial movement in three dimensional work that included wood, clay, metal, stone, plaster, waste, polyester, ceramics, and bread, has been examined by Stokvis.<sup>128</sup> Included in this is also a breadth of work in painted sculptures, decorated furniture, murals, and house painting. Furthermore it will be argued that *some* of these forms are more difficult to







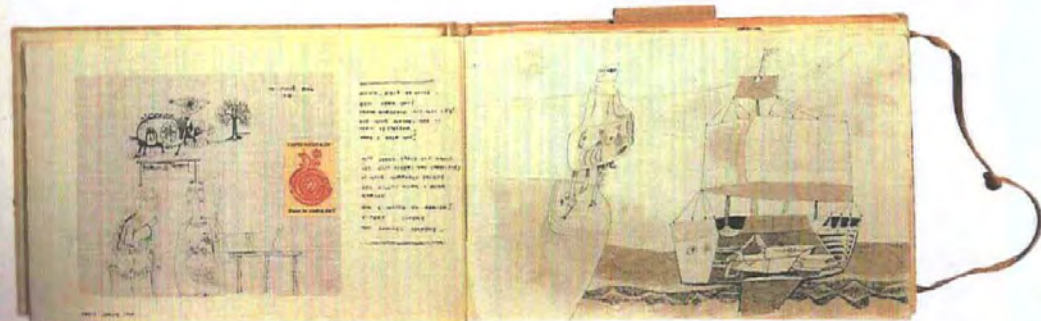


1949, bronze – originally gypsum, h. 55 cm.  
Private Collection.

95 Shinkichi Tajiri, *Warrior (Guerrier)* 1949,  
bronze – originally gypsum, h. 135 cm.  
Private Collection.

96 Shinkichi Tajiri, 2 pages from his  
*Notebook*, 1950-2, pen and watercolour on  
paper, 16.5 x 25.5 cm, Artist's Collection.

97 Shinkichi Tajiri, *Warrior (Guerrier)* 1952,  
iron, h. 60 cm, signed and dated underneath  
thickest foot, Private Collection.





understand only within a sculptural and primitivist aesthetic of a Cobra language.

### **Bachelard and an experimental materialism**

Some Cobra interests and ideas about materiality were also developed through contact with the ideas of Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard was a contemporary of the Cobra group, and teaching in Paris at the time. 'Bachelard was hard at work during those years of the German Occupation; his first methodological outlines, *psychoanalyse de feu* (Psychoanalysis of fire), was published in 1937; his book *L'Eau et les Reves* appeared in 1943, *L'Air et les Songes* (The Air and its songs) in 1943. These would be followed in 1948 by the two volumes of *La Terre* (The Earth), which dwelt with the dreams of the will and the dreams of repose.'<sup>129</sup> The titles themselves reflect Bachelard's poetic presentations of a material imagination and of its creative emergence through the elements, and in nature. Stokvis writes that Cobra members, or rather the young Surrealist members and their magazine who were to become Cobra members, attended his Lectures. 'Of greatest significance, perhaps, to these revolutionary young people was the philosophy of Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) whose lectures at the Sorbonne – particularly those on Literature – were seen as major cultural events, where students would meet to distribute the various issues of *La Main à Plume*.'<sup>130</sup> Poetry, science, and psychoanalysis were all of interest to them. In addition to Marx, Bachelard's philosophy of art contributed towards Cobra thinkers

exploring facets of an experimental dialectical materialism, especially for Dotremont.<sup>131</sup> 'For several members of Cobra, his book, *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* (the Earth and the Dreams of the Will, Paris, 1948) was especially important.'<sup>132</sup> Therefore 'Bachelard fulfilled their desire to go further than the anti-rationalism of Surrealism. He wished to unite the irrational and the rational,' and 'In his ideas on artistic expression and the sources of fantasy, Bachelard was to be of great significance to the forthcoming Cobra group.'<sup>133</sup> Williamson says 'Bachelard's premises provided a critique of Cobra's key ideological enemy and source: Breton's Surrealism.'<sup>134</sup>

In image-based terms "The Danish group of Linien (a pre cobra group) in 1934 rejected the 'photographic representation of dream visions and sexual fantasies, which the orthodox surrealists had adopted, and Cobra were later to follow their example. But finding a mode of expression which departed from all the rules, and creating images freely from the material, proved not quite so simple, and it was not until 1938 that a spontaneous expression began to break through in the painting of a few artists.'<sup>135</sup> The specifics of a material process recovered significance for sculptural and image-based practices. For Cobra, Bachelard's 'material imagination' was highly significant for its sculptural and 3 dimensional and painting work. 'Imagination invents more

than objects and dramas; it invents a new spirit; it opens eyes which have new types of vision' (*L'Eau et les Rêves*).<sup>136</sup>

Bachelard's ideas about a materialistic 'unforming' of images unshaped a different artistic process to one where the psychic imagination glimpsed images: 'The perceived image and the created image, were, in fact, 'two different psychical cases: a specific word is needed to describe the imagined image...we always want our imagination to be the faculty of *forming* images. Well, it is rather the faculty of *unforming* images, furnished by perception.'<sup>137</sup> Moreover 'if the imaginative function was the animator of matter in his innovative work, it did not allow itself to imagine passively; there was an exchange and a two-way movement, a dynamic interaction between the ego and the world, the will and the matter on which it exerts.'<sup>138</sup> This interaction, in terms of a method, uncovered a dynamic process, one in which the boundaries between subject (the artist) and object (material) were more amorphous than the Surrealist's psychic object of the unconscious. Bachelard in *Air and Dreams, An Essay on the Imagination of Movement* (pre Cobra in 1942), references a future Cobra contributor Raoul Ubac's ideas about objects changing in a realm called counter-space.<sup>139</sup> For Alechinsky it was 'Through action alone thought intercedes into matter.' Pol Bury writes - 'There, we are able to find the foundations of material painting, where the active imagination insinuates itself between the coloured surfaces,

using its wits to rediscover in the arabesque and the tracing of various movements which the mind passed through at the time of creation or in dreaming about it over again what the mind of the painter did not suspect.’<sup>140</sup>

Dotremont had met Bachelard and was influenced by him: ‘Almost unbeknown to himself, the person who understood abstract art most radically, Bachelard, would influence me in the direction of Cobra.’<sup>141</sup> He writes ‘...the one from whom I was gradually and imperceptibly to adopt the most elements that were to lead me to join Cobra, that was Gaston Bachelard...In my opinion, Bachelard was the one who understood free abstract art down to its deepest foundations: through his books, his friendship, through what he had to say, he was to play a decisive role in Cobra, in Belgium at least...’<sup>142</sup> According to Lambert, some of Dotremont’s ideas make links to Bachelard’s work: ‘the image is not the juxtaposition of two objects, or two ideas [but] the materialisation of the connection between them, as the word is the symbolic materialisation of the object.’<sup>143</sup> Similarly Lambert acknowledges ‘no-one provided a clearer illustration of Bachelard’s aphorism, which was quoted in the last issue of Cobra: “Art is grafted nature” than Henry Heerup’<sup>144</sup> And in Corneille’s prose-poem, accompanying the 1962 lithographs ‘For a spectacle of nature’ Lambert asserts that ‘In Corneille, Bachelard would have found the ideal illustrator for *La Terre et les Reveries du repos*.’<sup>145</sup> In an exhibition catalogue about the

collaboration of textile work between Jorn and Waemere there is a page and a half introduction by Bachelard. Williamson's research, among many other examples, cites the influence of Bachelard on Jorn's 'Discourse with the Penguins, in Cobra 1 - 'Jorn wrote an article in Cobra for which Bachelard, though cited, is the obvious key source,'<sup>146</sup> and in Cobra 10 - 'In the Cobra imagery, Bury and Alechinsky cite his writing.'<sup>147</sup> In Cobra 2 are short articles by Constant, Jorn, and Pol Bury about the significance of materiality, material art, and material painting. Organic methods of painting and active imagination bound to sensorial reactions. It is here that Constant says ... 'we only find the real source of art in the material,' and in sensation.

Bachelard's themes included the significance of materials, material process, and the poetics of transformation. 'Even though Bachelard was interested primarily in poetry and literary works, it is easy to understand precisely what artists could draw from this conception, which overturned classical relationships.'<sup>148</sup> First 'Materialism' meant something quite specific to Bachelard; it stemmed from the four primordial elements or materials – Earth, Water, Air, and Fire.'<sup>149</sup> And perhaps Bachelard's imaginative materialism helps distinguish some of the formative factors of Cobra concerns from its politico-material contexts. 'For all its social applicability and emphasis on imagination and artistic freedom, Marxism could not utter to the Cobra theorists, who are not social activists, a philosophy appropriate

to the creation of objects.' Williamson called Bachelard's thinking 'a materialism of the imagination' or a dialectical materialism. Its materialism, as an artistic process, affirmed for Cobra's notions about the independent character of art. More broadly, Williamson also acknowledges that many Cobra artists had no interest in Bachelard or Marxism whatsoever: Heerup, Alsfelt, and Bille, among others.<sup>150</sup> Birtwhistle mentions there were already established artistic languages to which Bachelard's ideas were a supplement: and that it was principally the Cobra artists/theorists that developed premises proposed by Bachelard.

There are some important contentions about the timing of Bachelard's influence upon Cobra thinkers, although it centres upon Jorn and his theoretical formulations at the time of Cobra, as well as on the significance of his pre-existing lines of enquiry. Lambert maintains it was 'Jorn above all who brought a wealth of theoretical extensions to Bachelardism.'<sup>151</sup> Though Birtwhistle, conversely, contextualises Bachelard's impact and states significantly that '...in assessing the significance of Bachelard for Cobra care should be taken in noting that a general course had already been set by older influences, e.g. from Surrealism and Danish Art...'<sup>152</sup> Similarly regarding Jorn's 1946-49 manuscripts (pre Cobra) that developed a methodology of the arts 'we would suggest no particular reason to regard Bachelard as a 'key

source' in them'.<sup>153</sup> Birtwhistle points out that Jorn's formulation of a dialectic and method relate to an indigenous influence, Lundberg.

Birtwhistle says 'Jorn was an eclectic, as for that matter were Bachelard and Read, and the presence of similar sources, themes, and directions in the thinking of these men need come as no surprise.'<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, as regards other members of Cobra and the influence of Bachelard, particularly the Belgian contribution, Birtwhistle acknowledges that passages by Pol Bury, in the second number of the Journal (March 1949), 'extrapolate a concept of the arabesque quite explicitly from Bachelard and draw out in lyrical terms Bachelard's notion of the meeting between matter and the human imagination.'<sup>155</sup> Similarly Birtwhistle also writes that 'Jorn came to value Bachelard very highly...'<sup>156</sup> Indeed, post Cobra, Jorn painted a portrait of Bachelard that is housed in the Silkeborg museum in Denmark. In Jorn's library, housed at Silkeborg, there are at least nine volumes of Bachelard's work, some with French and Danish notes scribbled by Jorn in the margins. Birtwhistle effectively seems to write that Bachelard influenced Jorn in terms of specific insights rather than as a general philosophical foundation of his post war theories.<sup>157</sup> While Lambert writes that Jorn in his post-Cobra work was to extend Bachelard's ideas.

Jorn for example, before and after Cobra, developed an interest in the making of tapestries and collaborated with fellow artist Pierre Wemaere, as far back as 1946, where they made a small number of pieces, 'The Bird in the Forest' for example. It was also at this time that Jorn went on a visit to Djerba in Tunisia, met up with Wemaere and made visits to the blanket weavers. In the 1950s Jorn worked again with Wemaere on 'Summer Flower', though, after their experiments of spontaneity they were disappointed to find their work 'was like all the tapestries made in traditional studios rather than their own.' However Wemaere recalls 'Asger longed to get a commission for a very large tapestry...It was at this point that the Danish Arts Foundation invited him to make a large ceramic mural for the new secondary school in Aarhus.'<sup>158</sup> He also says about Jorn: 'When he came to see me he told me that he would agree to make the ceramic on condition that they would at the same time commission us to make an important tapestry.'<sup>159</sup> They were commissioned to make the tapestry in 1958, the culmination of which was a piece of work 1.8 by 14m and called the Long Voyage. At its exhibition in 1959 at the Galerie des Quatre Saisons in Paris, Wemaere says: 'We wanted to give our exhibition a suitable send off, so we called on Gaston Bachelard, whom Asger was seeing frequently at the time.'<sup>160</sup> Bachelard wrote a catalogue preface that he called 'La creation ouverte,' Open creation.<sup>161</sup>



### **Creativity and actions, experimentation and collaborative artworks**

Creativity was sourced as a vital wellspring - its contention was central to Cobra. Although it sounds an obvious claim for an art group to make, its distinction of creativity from art was important. 'Whether they are Jorn's, Dotremont's or Constant's, the stances taken have common ground; more than a particular art form, they are concerned with creative activity for its own sake, the conditions under which it emerges, its ontological statute, its place in society and real life, with all the contradictions and paradoxes which that entails...'<sup>162</sup> Creativity was a central framework. Although its understanding differed within the group and in some ways it represents the articulations of the Cobra polemicists, Dotremont for example, underlined a diversity of Cobra practises. 'And since we consider the stimulation of the creative impulse as arts main task, we will try henceforth to arrive at an effect which is as material and suggestive as possible. In this respect, the creative act is much more important than the object created.'<sup>163</sup> The creative and momentary act stretched and reconstituted traditional aesthetic notions. Although Cobra artist Alechinsky acknowledges 'It is not aesthetics which engender poetic creation, but creation itself which manages to clear a way for itself in spite of all dogmas.'<sup>164</sup> Creativity, for Cobra, was art, yet it also went beyond the terms of its aesthetic delineation. For Jorn, the source of creativity held an almost mystical and vital significance. Atlan, in issue 6 of Cobra, stated 'The creation of a work of art cannot be reduced to a few

formulae nor to some more or less decorative ordering of forms, but it supposes a 'presence'...' <sup>165</sup> Though it was not all serious. 'Play. This was a fundamental theme which would be developed by Constant in his thinking as well as his painting.; to be part of Cobra was to recognise oneself as *Homo ludens*, a designation which the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga proposed substituting for the inadequate *Homo sapiens* or *Homo faber*.' <sup>166</sup>

Constant wrote that 'A painting is not a construction of colour and line but an animal, a night, a scream, a human being, or all these things together.' <sup>167</sup> Similarly 'Cobra was not an ism but a delirium of action.' <sup>168</sup> In a later tribute to Dotremont, Jorn wrote; 'In everything that he said and did Dotremont never failed to impress us with the necessity for 'experimentation.' And there was always something young and lively about this. Only now do I clearly see the importance of this personal force which kept the Cobra movement firmly opposed to any kind of aestheticism or formalism (not only classical formalism, but abstraction- whether hot or cold.)' <sup>169</sup> 'Dotremont wanted to reinforce the experimental current which he felt to be 'more than ever under attack because it is more and more necessary in a society paralysed by formalism.' <sup>170</sup> Similarly 'Dotremont wanted the experimentation put forward by Jorn, as a general concept, as the means of encouraging spontaneity and through that, of encouraging the vital source of being, to be extremist, even simplistic.' <sup>171</sup> For example 'Jorn began, from 1949 onwards,

to allow his inner vision and mood to dictate that he would paint, without any regard for conventional standards of aesthetic decorum. His 'expressionism' dates from this period.'<sup>172</sup> Indeed, according to Dotrement, 'Far from being the withdrawal that some call it, experimentation in art is permanent war.' Appel's 'Innocence' painting accuses, Constants paintings are called 'Disobey', and a 'School for Villains.' He says '...it is courage, not discipline which will win us the war' and 'Let us fill Mondrian's virgin canvases even if it is only with our misfortune.'<sup>173</sup>

In formal terms, Cobra was anti-aesthetic, and anti-specialisation. Dotrement wrote 'Society put a pen in my right hand, I put a pencil in my left.'<sup>174</sup> Similarly 'Corneille and Appel discovered in Paris after the Second World War 'the resounding proof that challenging all aesthetic codes, all 'isms' could inspire the most original creation.'<sup>175</sup> The experimental and the spontaneous characterised a momentary and mercurial essence. 'It is precisely this act of destruction that forms the key to the liberation of the human spirit from passivity.'<sup>176</sup> Yet the formal was not the only criteria of Cobra art '...for Jorn himself the question of the difference between success and failure ceased, from now on, to be based entirely on aesthetic considerations.'<sup>177</sup> For example, in the war visions Jorn expressed himself with 'unrestrained and unguarded violence...'<sup>178</sup> Constant condemned art

that was 'indifferent to sensitivity for sensitivities sake.'<sup>179</sup> Art, principally, was about the re-humanisation of the artist (Jorn).

Cobra to a significant extent was drawn by an interest, for the most part undogmatic, in the values, actions and contexts of art. Dotremont wrote 'Cobra will seek in action itself how far the stable principles of experimentation can go.'<sup>180</sup> Similarly he re-published an article by Atlan in issue 6 of Cobra who wrote about 'concrete action and immediate practice' as alternative arguments to realism and abstraction.'<sup>181</sup> Jorn writes - 'The current process of art is not a search for acclaim, admiration, being marvelled at like an elephant at the zoo, but (being) a tool capable of acting on the spectator. That is why art is action and not description.'<sup>182</sup> Furthermore he goes to write 'Where does the artist find the vitality he expresses? In nourishing himself on the life of nature and the human environment, sociability in the broadest (international) and the deepest (Local) sense.'<sup>183</sup>

Can Cobra be compared to Dada in any way? Stokvis argues there are some superficial comparisons to be made about Dada and Cobra though writes: 'In reality the two movements are almost opposite. The reaction of the Dada movement to its time can be seen as sarcastic, derisive, and therefore, in a certain sense, negative. Cobra's response was to do away with everything that proved hollow and superficial; to search for the deepest, most extreme

significance in life and art.’<sup>184</sup> Dada also passed the Netherlands by unnoticed. However Dada’s nihilistic strand makes it impossible to compare with Cobra, in terms of its search. Though Constant in his own way does make a link with Dada and Lambert mentions that ‘Brands devoted himself to dadaist collages and assemblages with a great spirit of invention...’<sup>185</sup> A simplistic historical comparison between Dada and Cobra is that both appear as art groups after World Wars. Some thematic links might be found with the outlooks of specific early dada members, Richter, or Hugo Ball, for example, who were more politically involved.<sup>186</sup> Yet Stokvis’ differentiation of Cobra and Dada is important for understanding the re-orientations of Cobra outlooks, actions and experiments to a different realm outside dada’s avant-garde and individual anti-aesthetic.

Collaborative work and Cobra events are an important achievement of Cobra. Collaboration almost became a rite of initiation for future members. It was a theme that fascinated the group in many different ways. In the picture poems it brought artists and poets together. While they had their differences about the merits of a ‘Cobra art’ and painting, both Dotremont and Constant came to acknowledge that Cobra’s central achievement was its collective work (see illustrations). There are however several different facets of collaborative work so in this chapter they have been split into two realms – collaborative work as an unconventional aesthetic, and collaborative and situated work. In



In one of the rooms at the Høst exhibition in Copenhagen, November–December 1948. *Standing, from left to right:* Ernest Mancoba, Carl-Henning Pedersen, Erik Ortvad, Ejler Bille, Knud Nielsen, Tage Møllerup, Aage Vogel-Jørgensen and Erik Thommesen. *Middle row:* Karel Appel, Christian Dotremont, Sonja Ferlov and Else Alfelt. *Front row:* Asger Jorn, Corneille, Constant, Henry Heerup and his recorder.



a



b



c



d



e



f

(a) The Experimentalists taking their work to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam for the important Cobra exhibition held in November 1949. From left to right: Rooskens, a passer-by, Schierbeek (with a painting by Gilbert), Wolvecamp, Brands, Götz, Corneille, Doucet, Alechinsky, Tony Appel, Lucebert, Elburg, Tajiri, Kouwenaar, Constant, Appel, Victor Nieuwenhuys (with a painting by his father, Constant).

(b) International exhibition of "Cobra" experimental art at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 3-28 November 1949. The broad corridor at the entrance to the exhibition. On the wall in the background, *Barricade*, the picture specially painted for the exhibition by Constant.

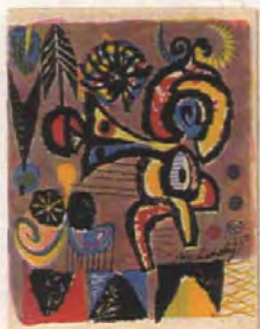
(c) Tony Appel and Aldo van Eyck hanging a room with work by Appel in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, November 1949. (Van Eyck is carrying a painting by Constant entitled *The Witch's Beast*.)

(d, e, f) The three photographs on the left were taken in Amsterdam in November 1949, the two at the top in Constant's house, the third during the party after the opening of the exhibition. Those present include: Appel, Corneille, Constant, Tony Appel, Else Alfelt, Tajiri, Doucet, Aldo van Eyck, Henny Riemens, Carl-Henning Pedersen, Erik Ortvaad and K.O. Götz.

some ways the division is arbitrary, as there are also connections and unresolved tensions between them that are important. However the division may contribute to understanding differences that were shared by Dotremont and Constant. Dotremont for example held the view that Cobra experiments led to distinctive on-going experiments that were not conventionally painterly ones, while Constant remained adamant that 'Cobra art' was precisely what the movement had not created.<sup>187</sup> In this section collaborative work as an unconventional aesthetic is highlighted.

There are many examples of collaborations in Cobra work. Writers worked with painters, painters worked on a series of 'modifications', altering existing paintings. All Cobra artists in one way or another collaborated. For example poems by Dotremont were illustrated by Corneille.<sup>188</sup> There were texts and drawings by Dotremont and Jorn, and word paintings. Dotremont also worked with Atlan, Alechinsky, Appel and Hugo Claus.<sup>189</sup> There were picture poems, or collective lithographs (see collective work illustrations).<sup>190</sup> The contribution of poetry to Cobra is a significant strand in its work.<sup>191</sup> The Dutch likewise worked together, for example 'the exquisite little booklet Good Morning Rooster...' a collaboration between Constant and poet Gerrit Kouenaar, among many others.<sup>192</sup> Collaborative projects in some ways enhanced the Belgian contribution to Cobra, though members from different nationalities were clearly working together. Collaboration became an









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7. *Il y a plus de choses dans la terre d'un tableau que dans le ciel de la théorie esthétique* (There are more things in the earth of a picture than in the heaven of aesthetic theory). Asger Jorn and Christian Dotremont (text). Oil on canvas, 1947/48, 99×103 cm, signed by Dotremont on reverse. Private collection, Belgium.

8. Christian Dotremont (text), Asger Jorn (drawing): two examples of the *peinture-mots* series, done between 1948 and 1953, published in Paris in 1961 under the title *La chevelure des choses*. Ink on paper, a. 1948, 19.6×14.3 cm, dated below right, b. 1949, 20.5×14.8 cm, dated below centre.

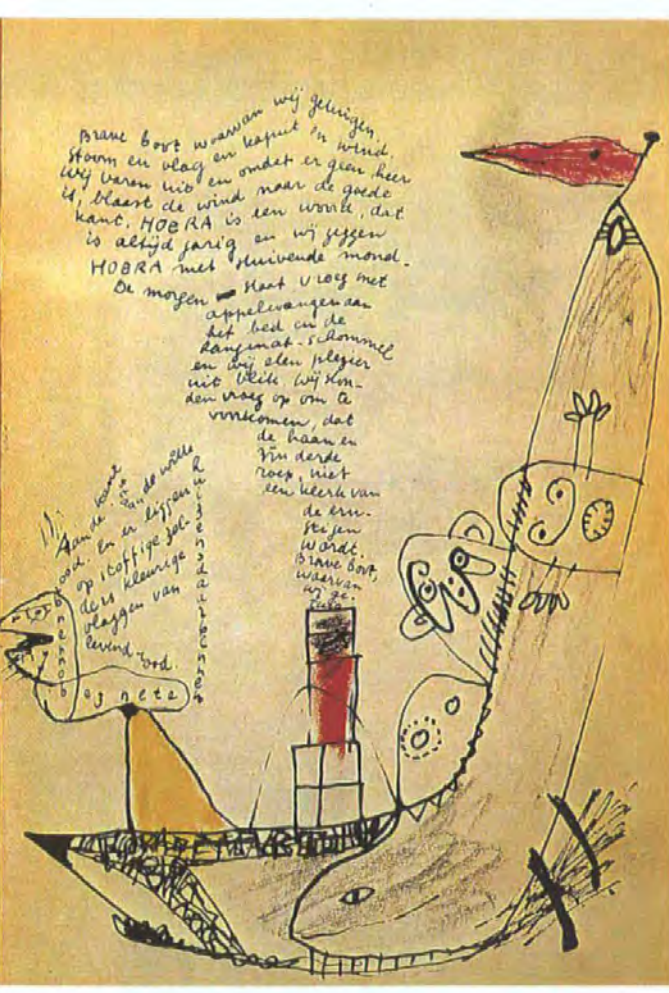
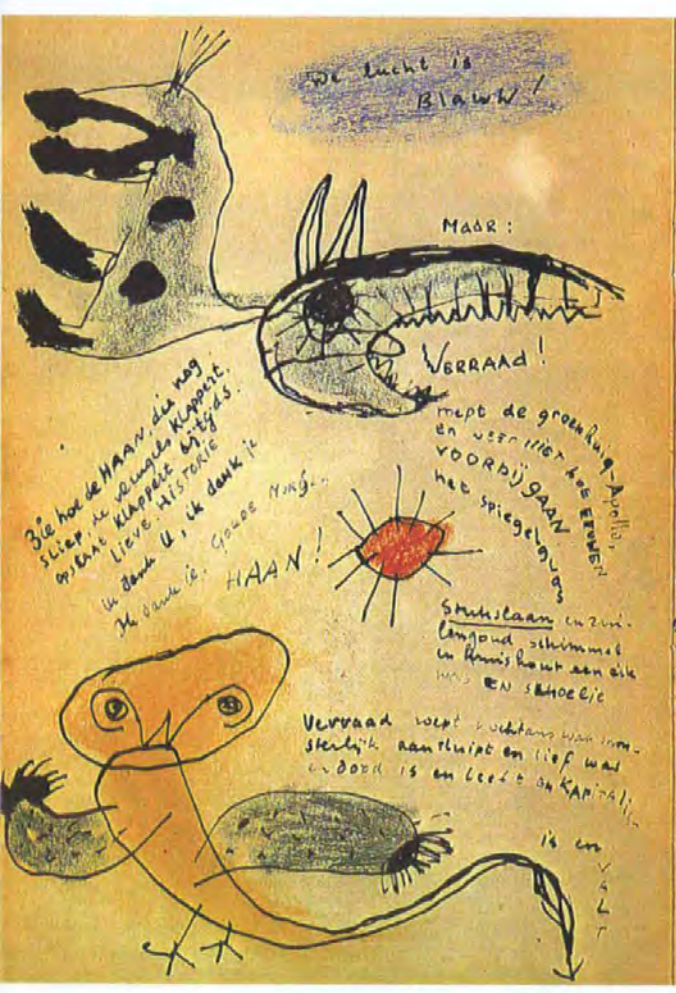
9. Corneille (standing) and Christian Dotremont, working in Brussels in 1949 (probably in the garden of Dotremont's home in the rue de la Paille). Photograph: Henny Riemsens.





4. Jorn, Appel, Constant, Corneille and Erik Nyholm painted over a work by Richard Mortensen a *Cobramodification*: 1949. Oil on canvas, 42.5 × 62.2 cm, signed above left by the three Dutchmen, below right by Nyholm. Collection Erik Nyholm, Funder, on loan to the Silkeborg Art Museum, Denmark.









Title page and double-page spread from *Goede morgen Haan* ('Good morning cockerel'), text by Gerrit Kouwenaar with drawings by Constant. Format: 17.5 × 25.5 cm. Each copy was touched in with coloured pencils. Published by the Experimentele Groep in Holland, Amsterdam, 1949. Print run: 30 copies.

Christian Dotremont, Micky  
Alechinsky and Luc de Heusch  
(Luc Zangrie) at the Ateliers du  
Marais in 1950.

On the typewriter cover, a wooden  
African object from the Congo.





10. CORNEILLE (14 gouaches, 16×13 cm), CHRISTIAN DOTREMONT (14 texts): *Improvisation*, 1949.  
Collection Karel van Stuijvenberg, Caracas.



10

11



11. JEAN-MICHEL ATLAN and CHRISTIAN DOTREMONT (text):  
*Les transformées*, 1950, a. front and back covers of a series of  
six gouaches with text, each 24.1×35 cm. b. One of the  
gouaches of the series.  
Collection Karel van Stuijvenberg, Caracas.

important stylistic and formal development of Cobra work. There was also interest from experimental film-makers, Jean Raine and Luc De Heusch (who used the pseudonym Luc Zangrie). The third issue of Cobra in June 1949 was published by the Belgians on the theme of the International Festival of Experimental and Poetic Film held that month in Belgium. Within the framework of the last Cobra exhibition Raine organised a small Festival of Experimental and Abstract Film.<sup>193</sup>

### **A Case for The Everyday**

Cobra's interest in the contexts and objects of art and life homed in on practices that shared a cluster of qualities in common. They investigated creative practices that were accessible and common-place, highlighting the collective values of creativity and that were lived rather than only studio-based or part of a specialised aesthetic Contexts that were developed included an interest in Folk art and Child-like art. Child art enhanced the spontaneous and the anti-aesthetic dimensions of Cobra, yet it also was something that was accessible, and found within everyday and collective usage. Folk art was not only an aesthetic configuration but also implicated specific socio-historical conditions and limitations, geographical and cultural differences (see folk art illustration). The Danish appraisal of Folk art, as will be seen was markedly different to the Dutch but both found its contexts relevant. 'Jorn detected those foundations of art which were the natural, the





Folk sculpture from the Ardennes, published in *Cobra 7* under the title *Eve the Terrible*. Boxwood with walnut stain (39 × 52 cm). Photo Serge Vandercam.

commonplace, or the obvious, access to which had been denied us by various inhibitions of a social or historic origin. In the pre-Cobra *Helhesten* journal, Jorn in the early 40s had written: "It is important to stress that the foundation of art rests in common life, the easy and the cheap, which reveals itself to be our most dear and indispensable possession."<sup>194</sup>

The commonplace favoured specific materials in a way that a classical hierarchy did not. Jorn wrote 'Glass paper and cotton wool are means of expression as noble and useful as oil paints and marble.'<sup>195</sup> Or Heerup who claimed there was no need for noble material 'Rubbish sculpture is close to nature since the material doesn't strive to be. It is.'<sup>196</sup> A commonplace attribution of everyday forms blurred the distinction between high art and its, perhaps, more down-to-earth counterpart, whereby 'Cologne cathedral is no more architecture than a glass of beer.' Found and everyday materials of Cobra sculptures and assemblages for example also fitted into these contexts, whether as pieces of wood, or Hoover parts.

Art and life complicated the theoretical and the already known. It brought practical contexts together with artwork and ideas. It seemed to contribute to a sense of fun, experimentation, or simply not-knowing. Cobra's interest in creativity extended '...to the conditions under which it emerges, its ontological statute, its place in society and real life, with all the

contradictions and paradoxes which that entails.' Creativity and the real world complicated the exclusively philosophical, the surreal unconscious or a specialised aesthetic. Categories were complicated by materials and processes, by spontaneity and by lived conditions. Its focus moved art away from orthodox surrealists' draw to the surreal unconscious. Given their criticism of the Surrealists, it facilitated new ways and new productive tensions for Cobra to explore. Strands of Cobra experiments were brought closer to extant sources of creativity and everyday forms, into contact with everyday objects and activities.

It is perhaps not surprising then that Cobra was to be influenced by Henri Lefebvre, who like Bachelard was also a contemporary of the group. 'In the formation of a Cobra spirit, the influence of Henri Lefebvre and his Book *Critique de la Vie Quotidienne* was as determinant as that of Bachelard.'<sup>197</sup> Although it is not easy to gauge the relevance of Lefebvre from the existing historiography - Lambert highlights Lefebvre's significance, while Stokvis' history does not mention Lefebvre. However Lefebvre was a contemporary of the Cobra group. His *Critique of Everyday Life* was published in 1946. Lefebvre was mentioned at a speech to mark the birth of the Surrealist Revolutionary group in October 1947 by Christian Dotremont, that the following year formed part of the Cobra group.<sup>198</sup> Lefebvre's book was published in 1947, and Lambert says 'Marxist hard-liners were reserved, if

not hostile about it...in contrast the Revolutionary Surrealists and a number of others found an indication of new paths of research and action in the book.'<sup>199</sup>

According to Lambert, Lefebvre's ideas about the everyday influenced Cobra artists and it is significant that, 'it could be said that Cobra's first two exhibitions, *La Fin et les Moyens* and *L'Objet á travers les áges*, could not help but invoke Lefebvre's ideas in their titles.'<sup>200</sup> Two Cobra exhibitions then explicitly referenced the everyday; the Belgian poets of Cobra organised an exhibition called 'the Object through the ages, August 1949' (*l'objet á travers les áges*) at the Palais de Beaux Arts in Brussels. Cobra artists explored a theme of 'experiments on everyday life.'<sup>201</sup> 'This short exhibition...displayed only simple, anti-aesthetic objects and in that respect it differed from surrealist exhibitions and heralded *arte povera*, the neo-dadaism of the Sixties, anti-art...' (see illustration)<sup>202</sup> Dotrement recounted that artists 'exhibited a compass drawing, a telephone, a huge mural poem, *Isabelle*, a bottle containing some words, a suitcase, the wax head of a shop window dummy... and 'Three elements at least should be given special consideration: a basket containing various objects at the public's disposal..., a brochure on musical perspectives, to which a call button had been fixed – an object which announced visitors- and the potatoes (we eagerly awaited the end of the exhibition so we could eat them).'<sup>203</sup> Dotrement writing in the



# L'objet à travers les âges

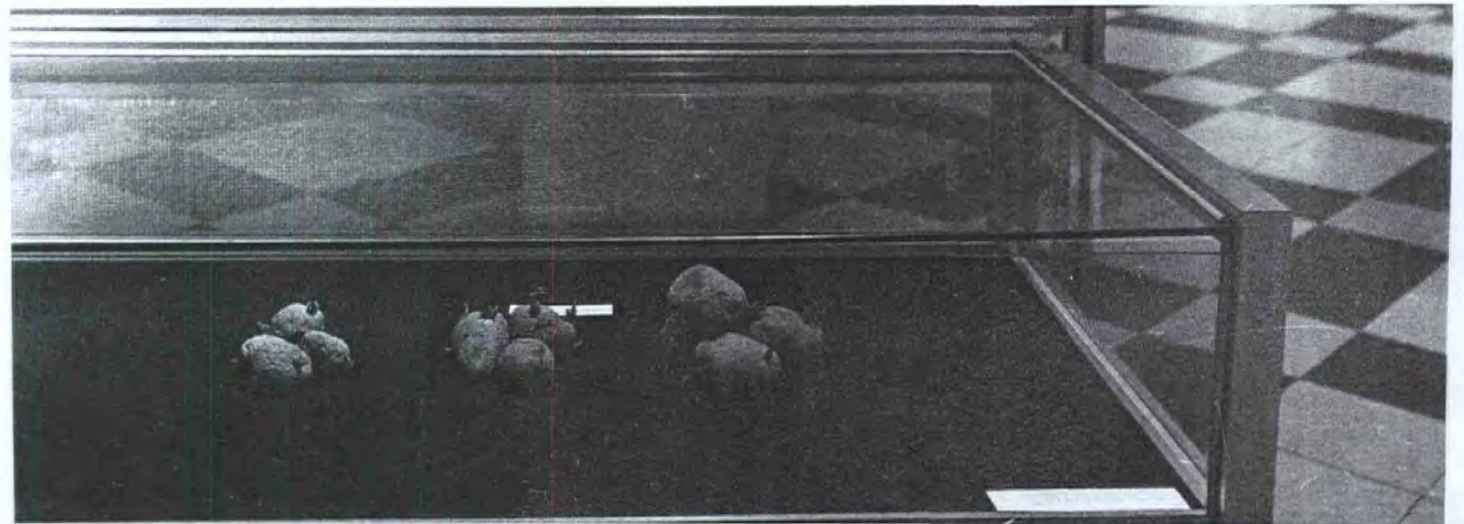
*Dans un but purement poétique  
quoique la connaissance y soit pour quelque chose  
le désir et la curiosité  
étant originellement identiques  
le groupe surréaliste-révolutionnaire  
que l'on trouve trop surréaliste  
et qu'ils trouvent trop révolutionnaire  
parce qu'il est l'un et l'autre  
pour que soit comble la mesure  
et que la fête batte leur plein  
pour que je retrouve Isabelle  
pour que tu te trouves  
et parce que nous n'aimons pas  
les fougères réalistes*

Prospectus for and invitation to 'The Object through the ages' exhibition, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 6-13 August 1949.

Reconstruction of two 'objects' which were featured in the exhibition, made for the Cobra Retrospective at the Town Hall in Brussels in 1974:

*left: The reserves of sensibility by Paul Bougoignie, Jacques Calonne, Christian Dotremont, Marcel Havrenne and Joseph Noiret.*

*below: Potatoes by Christian Dotremont. Photos Suzy Embo.*



1970s in a commentary about Pop Art that 'Whereas Duchamp's coaster, ready-made and inter-changeable as when it was exhibited for the first time, potatoes are perishable and need replacing and anyone has the right to replace me as the *author* in order to exhibit *them* today.'<sup>204</sup>

Lambert writes about Lefebvre's ideas; 'There are certain points in this programme which, clearly, would seduce Cobra: the methodical confrontation of so-called modern life with the past on one side and the possible on the other; the research of 'exact relationships' between the serious and the frivolous, the banal and the exceptional, the everyday and the feast, reality and dream.'<sup>205</sup> He mentions the direct similarities of Cobra and Lefebvre's relationship to the object as complex and joyful, as creative and relational rather than possessive.<sup>206</sup> Therefore in direct terms, according to Lambert, Lefebvre's ideas about the everyday were known to the group; his ideas helped to generate experimental Cobra work, and he was referred to in a few significant ways. Lambert writes about Lefebvre's ideas: 'Many of the premises of a theory of truly materialist art were here.'<sup>207</sup>

It is interesting that some of the criticisms of and sympathies for Surrealism by Cobra were also expressed in many similar terms by Henri Lefebvre and by his focus on moments and the everyday.<sup>208</sup> Lefebvre, early in his research career, was sympathetic to, and critical of, the Surrealists. He had

some contact with the Dadaists and Surrealists, as well as with Constant and the Situationists (see next chapter). There were also some elements within Surrealism itself that had already begun to explore themes that were outside of an individual aesthetic, and that branched into the everyday and the social world. This is evident in the work of Georges Batailles, in some of his works about history, international relations, archaeology, sex and tragedy, and in the Founding of the Institute for Surreal and Sociological research. Thematically some of the realms that Breton and the Orthodox Surrealists were moving away from - art, popular culture and politics - were also being reconsidered by other groups and thinkers, Lefebvre, Cobra, and strands of Surrealism, in new contexts such as the everyday.

Cobra and Lefebvre bring together thematically a collection of similar interests in the everyday. It is a realm of study in contemporary terms that is called Everyday Studies and Cultural Theory. It includes Benjamin's rag picker and trash aesthetics; the flâneur; Surrealism; the Mass Observations Project of the 1930s; Freudian studies of the everyday; anthropological ethnography, and Lefebvre's everyday studies. Ben Highmore counts all of these as making up a study of the everyday.<sup>209</sup> To this could be added Cobra interpretations of the everyday and more specifically as will be seen, some of their visual cultural research, and their creative methodologies. The field of its alliances then, in some limited ways outside of an art historical reading, is

original and significant. It brings together an interesting and unresolved set of thematic tensions and disciplines. A context and concept of the everyday enhance the productive tensions in some Cobra artworks and exhibitions. A context for the creative sociology of the everyday emerges, although thematic connections, differences, and historical comparisons with Cobra would need to be distinguished carefully.

### **Visual culture**

The Cobra journals were aggressively eclectic. They focussed, in different ways, on art and on a visual culture that included anthropological ethnography, folk art, and the everyday (see illustration). It included the imaginative power of children's art, and the insane. They wrote about the nature of materiality, and developments in the art scene. Constant wrote his fiery political manifesto. Their essays in the Cobra journal ranged from Rupestral etchings and magic, the Great Wall of China, Mother earth and Scandinavian fertility goddesses (Cobra 7), medieval painting, graffiti, the psychology of the comic strip, Constant's polemical Manifesto (Cobra 4), adventures in contemporary art (Cobra 6), art and materiality (Cobra 2), the similarity of written and plastic forms, as well as cinema (Cobra 3). Pol Bury, a Cobra artist who was later to move away from Cobra, nevertheless said 'The Cobra adventure as I experienced it was not a participation in a pictorial movement. It was more through texts than pictures that I





The Dutch experimental poets, as seen through the bars of the cage in which they were hanging, at the November 1949 exhibition in Amsterdam: (below) J. J. Louvenaar (middle, from left to right) J. J. Schierbeek, Lucebert and Elburg; (above) the German painter K.O. Götz.



Cartoon entitled *After the Experiment*, published in "Het Parool" (end of November beginning of December 1949). It shows Sandberg sweeping the floor after the Cobra exhibition in his museum.



Front and back covers of *Cobra, No. 4*, published in Amsterdam in November 1949. Photomontage by the Danish film-maker Jørgen Roos and the Danish Surrealist painter Wilhelm Freddie, 30.6 x 48.3 cm.



Cover of *Cobra, No. 7*, published in Amsterdam in the autumn of 1950, with a reproduction of a slate engraving by Paul Ubac.



Babylonian representation of the symbol of heaven: a snake coiled in spirals. This appeared in many Cobra publications as an emblem of the movement.



Symbol of a snake on one of two 4th-century gold horns, found near Gallehus (Denmark) in the 17th and 18th centuries respectively, also used as an emblem of the movement in many Cobra publications.

collaborated in it.’<sup>210</sup> Lambert quotes Jorn that, ‘Cobra was first and foremost a medium for an exchange of ideas...’<sup>211</sup> Cobra research implicates a field of visual culture and of creative thinking that a traditional aesthetic is unable to encompass fully.

Artists and artist-theorists sourced contexts and practices from their own past culture, and from popular cultures in the present. In terms of the former this included non-western cultures: North Africa, Africa, the Far East, and Scandinavian pre-prehistory. Lambert writes ‘The unknown world of the psyche, the lost continent of the sub-conscious, rediscovered through psychoanalysis, is also, in the atlas of culture and civilisation, that ‘of so called primitive art.’<sup>212</sup> For the Danes, Jorn especially, an artistic materialism had fundamentally important indigenous, anthropological, primitive, and historical nuances. He sourced Scandinavian prehistory for practices and artefacts, as well as for countering a formal western or classical-based aesthetic. Everyday art or folk art then had important cultural dimensions. For the Belgians, the visual cultural, in a historical form is less clear. However in Cobra 6 Dotremont’s manifesto, included illustrations of folk art, an externally painted house in Le Borinage, Belgium, and a Danish ironing board decorated with traditional woodcarving (see illustration).<sup>213</sup> Arguably, as a facet of the visual cultural, they explored script and handwriting. For Alechinsky, script and writing was important, Japanese calligraphy for

example, about which he made a film. And for Dotrement, words, and among others, word-pictures (peinture-mots) that were alliances with poets and painters.<sup>214</sup> In Cobra 3, that marked the arrival of Jean Raine and Luc De Heutsch, (as well as Alechinsky) the former was interested in film, and according to Lambert worked with Bachelard.<sup>215</sup> Luc De Heutsch, his companion from university, was an ethnologist 'and paved the way to a new approach to far-off societies and their systems of thinking and living...'<sup>216</sup> In a sense Cobra's outlook on materials is reflected in its research about material cultures, such as architecture and indigenous house building, calligraphy. Cartoons.

For the Dutch artists, a focus on folk culture came to have a different set of provenances than for the Danes. The Dutch, unlike their Danish counterparts, who had a rich and indigenous Scandinavian art history, had an absence of an alternative pre-history. Nonetheless it was understood in terms of the everyday and visual culture. There was 'no such far-off mythology for the Dutch to draw on. They expressed it in spontaneous and everyday expressions of child art. In painting terms in the naivety of child art (Constant, Appel). And in graffiti (Doucet) - for some in Cobra, it seems Graffiti were not only random acts but also expressions of participation or self-expression. Constant writes 'We have on the walls and pavements proof that man is being born as a being who wishes to demonstrate his

existence...'<sup>217</sup> Curiously then, the Dutch, Belgians and the Danes found some thematic commonality of approach through their own visual culture, yet looked to the past and the present. Though some Dutch artists also looked outside of children's art, to the 'primitive' cultures of others – Corneille, accompanied among others, by Aldo van Eyck, made contact with the folk art of Tunisia, and Rooskens with that of Black Africa.<sup>218</sup>

Thematically, the maternal realm is a facet of some of Cobra work. This also is explored in some of its visual cultural, or in anthropological, dimensions. For example in Cobra 7 Eja Raine wrote an article about Mother Earth, while Asger Jorn wrote about a Scandinavian fertility goddess, Frey: 'The abandonment of material to the imagination could be seen as a return of 'magical thought' in conjunction with mother nature.'<sup>219</sup> The emphasis on nature and its origins was an important Cobra theme and subject, see for example Jorn's, Three horses painting, or Heerup's Woman as temple (1951), that 'has associations with pre-historic finds.'<sup>220</sup> Or even Heerup's painting 'War mother'. For Heerup 'He also used the primordial female forms - breasts, belly and thighs – to make a variety of humorous sex symbols, as in his clay Female Temple of 1937, a sort of pink cake crowned by a single breast with moss growing out of the arm pits.'<sup>221</sup> In Tajiri's 'David and Mrs Goliath' 1949, as the title suggests, Goliath is a feminine figure, and it seems, given a phallic attribution.

To what extent were Cobra romanticising notions of a nostalgic search for origins? Birtwhistle acknowledges Cobra artists did romanticise elements of a primitivist aesthetic, in some ways that post-colonial studies began to reveal in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>222</sup> However he is also adamant that 'Cobra primitivism, as I have already suggested, cannot be defined only as a matter of cultural relations between the Westerner and the Other.'<sup>223</sup> Cobra artists were seeking primarily to tap similar sources within the everyday and within their own cultural heritage. And nor was their primitivism, in terms of a non-western other, a purified past, as the rawness of their own paintings demonstrate. So there was more to Cobra and their interests in anthropology than those defined by orientalist discourses. The Danish and French Cobra artists were fascinated, like Picasso and Matisse before them, by ethnographic sculptures, primitivist art and non-western cultures (pre-classical, oriental and arab).<sup>224</sup> Both Jorn and Corneille visited Tunisia; Alechinsky was fascinated by script and calligraphy; Rooskens was fascinated by the formal languages of ethnographic masks and anthropological artefacts (and music); and in terms of masks, so too were Bille, Corneille, Jacobsen, Ferlov, and Mancoba. Jorn, in particular would write extensively about art, culture, and archaeology in his life-long interest in the subject, before and outside the frame of Cobra, especially his own Danish heritage. He worked with the then Director of the National Museum

of Antiquities, P.V. Glob, had access to French Art Journals' interest in primitive art,<sup>225</sup> as well as to the extensive ethnographic collections in Copenhagen's National Museum.

Paradoxically, in artistic *and* political terms, Cobra thinkers maintained a non-conformist and broad cultural critique. They rejected facets of Western culture in the light of the Second World War, though not of art historical provenances. Yet nor was art seen in terms of a reduction to circumstantial political commitment or to schematic generalisations. They were neither existentialists nor social realists. Constant said 'Dialectical materialism has taught us that consciousness is dependent on social circumstances... Experiment is not only an instrument of knowledge, it is the very condition of knowledge in an age when our needs no longer correspond with the cultural conditions which must channel them.' He writes 'to create is always to do what is not yet known...' <sup>226</sup> 'The true realism, material realism, consists in searching for and expressing forms faithful to their content,' and 'material realism'...seeks forms of reality common to the senses of all men' (Jorn) 'to arrive at a common art, art which responds to the transformation of society,' (Constant).<sup>227</sup> Dotremont was drawn to Marxism because of a lack of any alternative of change and admitted a Jekyll and Hyde confusion in his art and politics. Jorn was drawn to Marxism because of the communal aspect of Marxism, its emphasis on physicality, time, and a dialectics of change. He

opposed metaphysics, existentialism, or idealism. Constant was the most radical and vociferous in advocating an end to the excesses of European culture, and he projected his ideas into the future.

Cobra was an acronym; but it was also a snake. The snake was a recurring symbol in Cobra work. Its appearance was neither coincidental, nor only lip service to the group's pan-European nomenclature. It was a symbol and an inscription they chose. It brings together some of their fascinations and curiosity, that were not culturally or politically dogmatic. The snake dominated the work of Alechinsky as a formal archetype. Jorn and Alechinsky would dedicate publications to them. A coiled snake was also a spiral and Jorn was fascinated by the symbol. In some cases he emphasised nature and the biological world. In a letter to Constant, Jorn wrote: 'evolution does not proceed in a straight line, but in a spiral; here is the discovery of dialectical materialism. Something which can be seen in the universe, the stars, the nebulae, just as much as in shells and plants.'<sup>228</sup> Dotrement, writing later about the choice of the name, said that 'There is certainly much to be thought about in the choice of a name which is not to be an *ism*, but that of an animal. We were against all *isms*, which implied systemisation. And Cobra is, after all, that snake which you often find in Cobra painting.'<sup>229</sup>

Dotrement 'published his writing under the imprint of *Serpent de mer* ('Sea Serpent').<sup>230</sup> The snake became, Lambert mentions, Dotrement's own personal totem. Dotrement says: 'In the Cobra bestiary, the snake was certainly a favoured figure,' and 'it was, in a positive negative duality (good-bad), a representation of life on the level of the instincts.'<sup>231</sup> In humorous articles Dotrement wrote a note about the venom of the Cobra. The Dutch were referred to as snakes who do not wear glasses, while 'the Alechinsky snake (belgium) sometimes wears them (in the cinema).'<sup>232</sup> Lambert mentions in history 'The snake is linked to labyrinths, knots, intertwinings, the wheel, all of which abound in Cobra.'<sup>233</sup> He says that the snake is used in religious symbolism from Mexico to India, from the Bible to the Scandinavian *Edda*, which Jorn had studied. 'All this suited Cobra art rather well, being violently earthy, if not peasantish, above all with the Danes.'<sup>234</sup> He also mentions that in 'The Earth and the Daydreams of Rest' Bachelard dedicated a chapter to the snake: 'one of the most important archetypes of the human soul. The animalised root is the sign of union between the vegetable and animal kingdom.'<sup>235</sup>

### **Creative Methods**

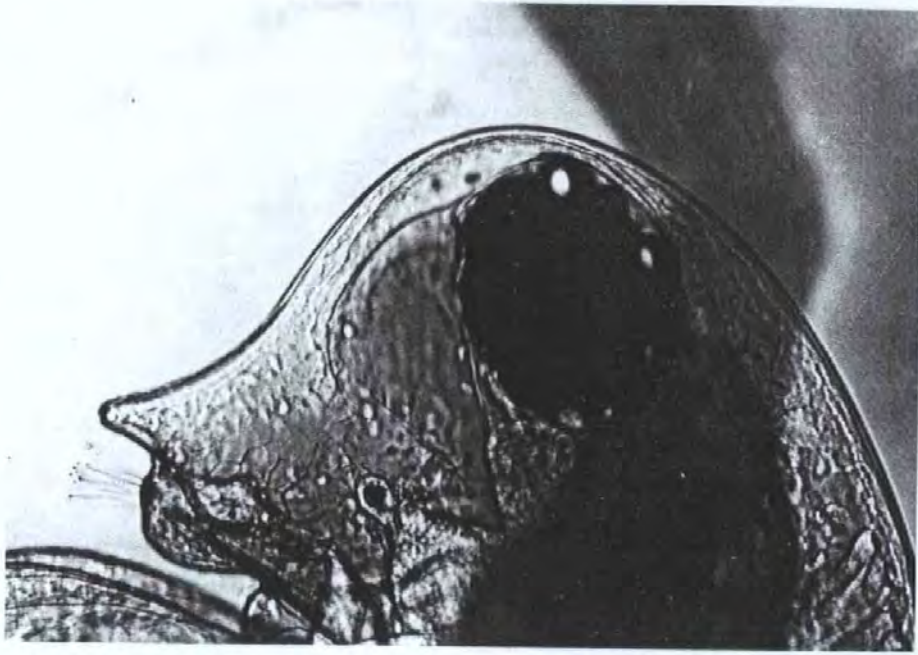
Cobra experimentalism, for Cobra polemicists and artists, brings together a field of productive connections, and creative methods, where artwork and ideas meet. In the build up to the formation of the Cobra group Stokvis says,



'The common ground they recognised during this initial contact was 'the general method – the dialectical materialism – and a great urge to experiment.'<sup>236</sup> Though it was not clear what dialectical materialism was, in broad terms, it framed a new set of experimental contexts, processes and developing methods that were not resolved and that are difficult to pin down in formal terms. This for example included the relationship of thought with the senses. Jorn for his part, stated that Cobra should 'put art back on the basis of the senses. We say "put back" because we think that the origins of art are instinctive, therefore materialist.'<sup>237</sup> Yet it wasn't only that either. Dotremont writing about Danish art proposes an *artist's stone* relative to a philosopher's stone...a thinking vivacity, a spontaneity which complies with our time, with our origins, and with the 'confused sensations we get in being born.'<sup>238</sup> Similarly he writes wryly about its processes: 'Emotion and understanding are inseparable, but they are not one and the same thing; they are two inseparable things.'<sup>239</sup> In Cobra 6, Dotremont is careful to distinguish Cobra from Dubuffet and L'art brut and its belittling of intellectualism, and he considers the relevance of socio-historical contexts and currents for art as well.<sup>240</sup> Jorn considered thought in terms of embodiment – 'the act of self expression is a physical act which embodies thought.'<sup>241</sup> He attached considerable scope to reflexive readings, 'Jorn did not exclude any reading – formal, psychological, mythological, social, historical, thus preserving the work in its polysemic indetermination.'<sup>242</sup>

The tensions within dialectical materialism and art methods were not reduced to a single synthesis. Cobra group did not express it as a single question, or as an answer. They found interesting connections and creative inspiration for a range of processes, objects and ideas. In the journals there were illustrations, juxtapositions of imagery – bits of art, artefacts, or even biological images that suggested connections. Dotrement compared art with science, poetry with film. 'To illustrate this most Bachelardian position, Dotrement and Alechinsky reproduced on the same page both the head of a water-flea, taken from a film shot through a microscope by Jean Painlevé, and the head of an Indonesian leather shadow puppet.'<sup>243</sup> The title page of Cobra 2 is a juxtaposition of images with the comment 'For natural art, like the breaking of a window pane or the growth of a town (see illustrations).'<sup>244</sup>

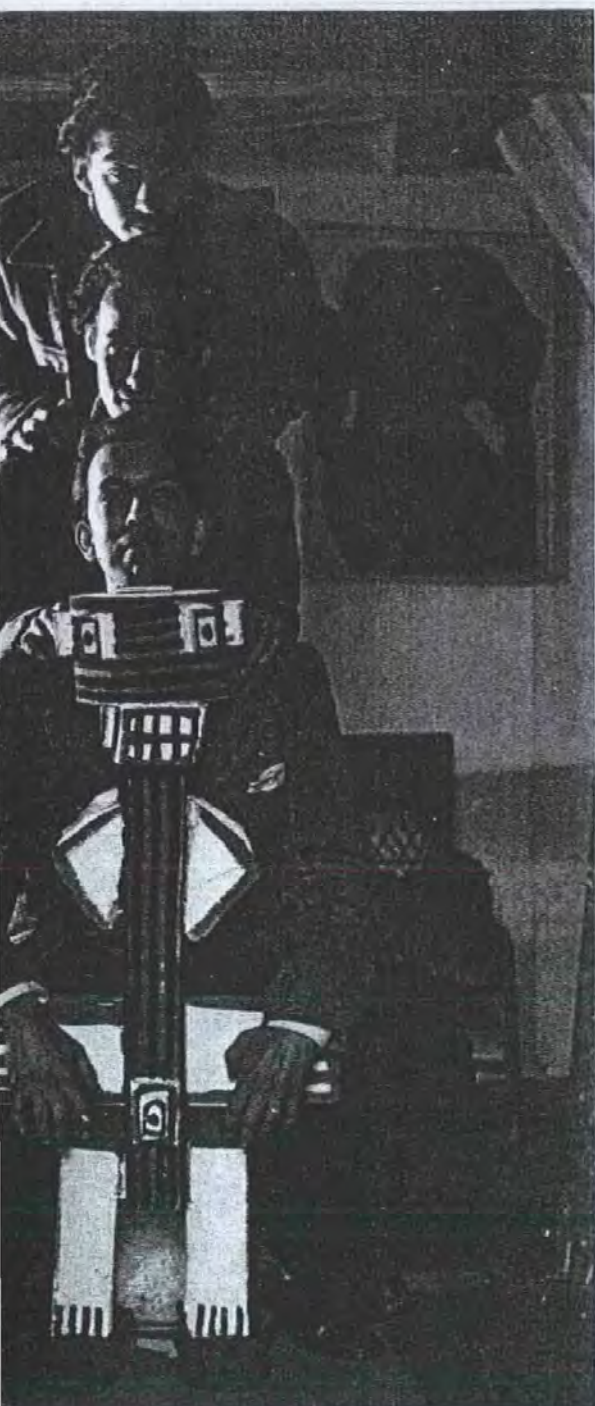
As with Bachelard, Cobra strove to go beyond the anti-rationalism of the Surrealists, that included thought but also a complex wariness of it and its connections to artwork. Jorn writes 'Knowledge is therefore an indirect and secondary experience, obtained from direct experience.' And '... artistic activity, though conditioned by the development of the intellect, is not in its origin the result of intellectual development but rather its motivating power.'<sup>245</sup> He spurned the term philosopher, yet he wrote articles, and books, some within the context of a dialectical or artistic materialism. Lambert



Comparisons published in *Cobra 3*:

above:  
The head of a waterflea, taken from a film by Jean  
Painlevé; head of an Indonesian shadow puppet.

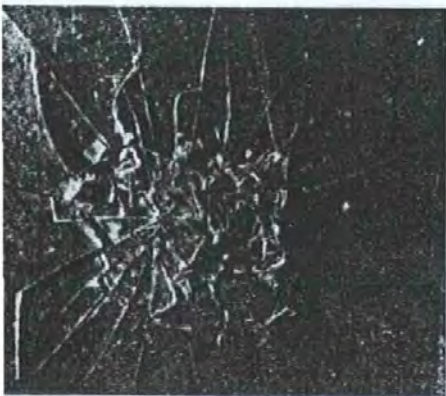




Appel, Corneille and Constant in Appel's studio in Amsterdam, Oudezijds Voorburgwal, 1948. In the foreground, a painted wooden sculpture by Karel Appel.



Cover of *Cobra 2*, Brussels, March 1949 (23 × 30.5 cm).  
Linocut by Pol Bury.



Juxtaposition of images published on the first page of *Cobra 2* with the comment: 'For natural art, like the breaking of a window pane or the growth of a town.'

writes that Jorn's uncertainties about thought make the problems his own, and 'it is surely a question of the acuteness of the polarity between instinct and intellect, underlined, if Freud is to be believed, by the malaise of our civilisation, of every civilisation.'<sup>246</sup> He writes that 'Jorn expanded the polarity of the instinct and the intellect to maintain (this was his wager) a kind of alternation without harmonisation, an attitude of whose dangers he was not unaware.'<sup>247</sup> That is, that leads to schizophrenia or split personality. Lambert acknowledges that 'even if Jorn was not referring specifically to psychoanalysis, one cannot help thinking of the famous 'malaise in civilisation' as analysed by Freud: nature and/or culture, civilisation and/or primitiveness, spiritual and/or sensorial.'<sup>248</sup>

'It was a matter of making living and the experienced coincide, of going from the absence of 'real life' (Rimbaud) to an abundant here and now, an abundant present...This would in any case be the moral climate of Cobra, whose works would never claim to be anything other than the realization of essential moments.'<sup>249</sup> The visual cultural in the past and the present, was an experimental outline. Indirectly, Cobra incorporated the fundamental relevance of the present in its exploration of artwork and lived dimensions of visual culture. How else could the distant pre-history of Scandanvian archaeology and Oceanian masks be considered in some similar terms with artists' own practices, or with the Dutch practices of child art in the present?

At one extreme, speaking about Heerup's abstract terra cotta figures, 'female temple', Egill Jacobsen said of him 'he taught us that the distance between the past and the present is a small one.'<sup>250</sup> It was an instinctive relationship for Heerup. He followed the rhythms of the seasons in his work, and worked in different media according to the seasons. For the Danish section, Cobra intuited the presence of a living culture in its pre-history. Lambert mentions history for Cobra was seen 'not only as a storehouse of forms for a stylistic revival (as was the case with the Cubists and African art), but also, in fact primarily, as a means for rediscovering the spirit and values which transcend history, a heritage of the romantic impetus...'<sup>251</sup> He also writes 'this nostalgia for one's origins is one of the characteristics of twentieth century modernism: it did not usually develop without some aberrations, but in this respect, the effort of the Danish artists was exemplary.'<sup>252</sup>

### **The Contexts of Jorn's thinking and creative methods**

Cobra's visual culture brought together a specific though wide ranging mix of concerns. Jorn's pre-Cobra thought is considered in ways that are separate from, and related to, Cobra. His research and influence helps to underscore the relevance of ideas and connections about art forms and creative methods, as well as their problems. Jorn's ideas about dialectical materialism include a confusing array of themes. Yet 'Jorn's theories at the time of Cobra portrayed the classical as a current force to be reckoned with...In contrast to

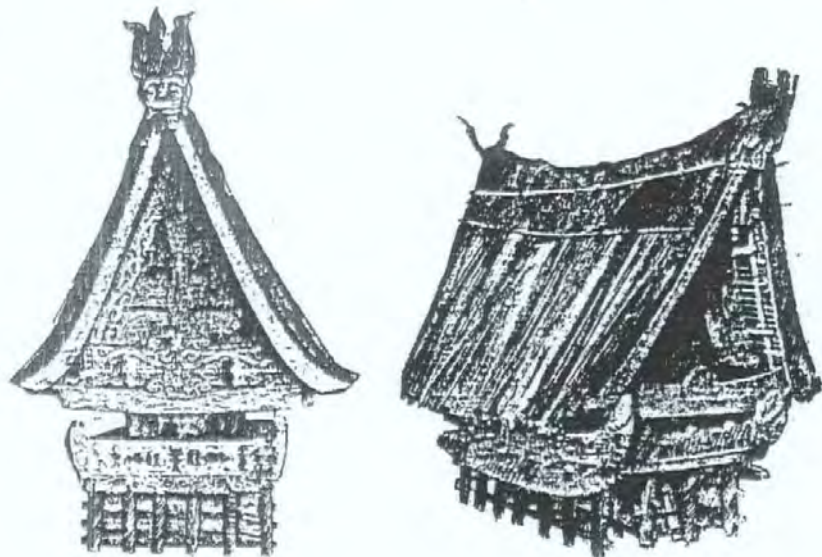
classical art, Jorn advocated an artistic principle which he identified variously as Dionysian, the primitive, the oriental, and the arabesque, and which he illustrated from his growing documentary collection of images from world art as well as from the work of modern artists whom he admired.<sup>253</sup> They incorporate Jorn's own set of influences, and some of the contexts of his thinking: 'Though not easily categorised as a mystic he was not a conventional Marxist either, and in his theories ...there is much that suggests he was trying to grasp the best of both 'worlds'.<sup>254</sup> For example he wrote an article about Ying Yang in 1947 as a dialectical material and sexual principle in life, in terms of a unity of the masculine and the feminine, or the father and mother of the world. He looks to dialectical symbols that include the wheel of fortune - the sunwheel and the moon-boat -, to symbols of copulation, African, Egyptian, and Assyrian, and illustrated together a Swedish rock engraved boat and Egyptian cult ship with erotic figures surrounded by a snake and a tree of life, a rock engraved boat with a snake, and a snake goddess drawing by Paul Klee (see illustrations).<sup>255</sup>

In 'The Life-content of the Language of Form,' of 1946 Jorn uses illustrations of non-western art and architecture as good dialectical design. For example a traditional Sumatran house as a unity of design 'between nature and culture.'<sup>256</sup> Some of the caption reads: 'The painterly, the sculptural and the architectonic are one and the same thing – no distinction is



Dialectical design:  
Model houses from Sumatra  
Illustration to Jorn's article 'The Life-  
content of the language of form'.

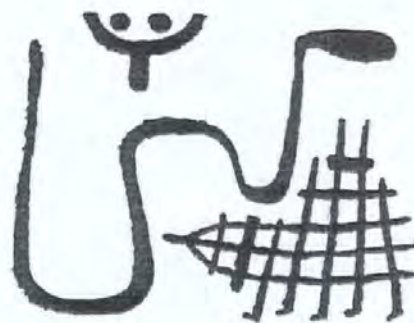
48



Jorn's caption reads:  
In primitive architecture, and in  
primitive art generally, there is no  
opposition between spontaneity and  
construction. The painterly, the  
sculptural and the architectonic are one  
and the same thing – no distinction is  
imposed between nature and culture.  
Her, unity prevails; true urbanism.

Illustrations to Jorn's article 'Yang-Yin',  
pages 31-33.

Jorn's captions read:  
(above) Swedish rock-engraved boat  
and Egyptian cult-ship with erotic  
figures surrounded by a snake, and a  
tree of life.  
(centre) Rock-engraved boat with  
snake.  
(below) Snake-goddess, drawing by  
Paul Klee.





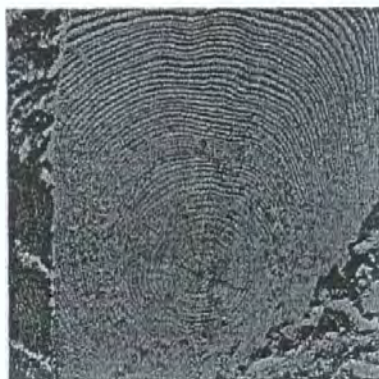


FIGURE 21

Illustration to Jorn's article 'The Way of Poetry'.

Jorn's caption reads:  
The rhythmic course of the earth round the sun leaves its mark in the undulating yearly rings in the tree. It is possible to date the tree from them. Every year has its characteristic mark like a fingerprint.



'Abstract symbolic drawings' by Jens Lund, 1898, used by Jorn as illustrations to his article 'The Prophetic Harps', in *Helhesten*, November 1944 pp. 148, 150.

The drawing 'A flower of eternal development' (below) was also retained among the folder of illustrations for *Magic and the Fine Arts* in the later 1940's.



imposed between nature and culture. Here unity prevails; true urbanism.'<sup>257</sup>

It is also here that Jorn suggests that Klee attempts to 'dissolve the conflict between instinct and thought, between spontaneity and construction, between the human animal and the angel.'<sup>258</sup> Birtwhistle writes that Jorn's intention is the elucidation of a dialectical materialist understands of art, what Jorn calls an 'artistic materialism.'

In what Birtwhistle has called Jorn's 'Lundberg articles', an influential architectural theorist, Jorn was writing within a context of ideas that a new sociology of art was needed. 'Lundberg's 'The Formal Language of Architecture' also revolves around the links Jorn establishes between cultural forms and the material terms of his existence...' <sup>259</sup> It reflects the growing interest in the late 40s (1946-49) in Swedish architecture of an interest in 'old Swedish churches, houses, and peasant buildings which accompanied an emphasis on craftsmanship and a 'leaning towards primitiveness.''<sup>260</sup> And therefore Jorn's interest in primitive or indigenous architectures. In addition Jorn was influenced by Blomberg who 'suggested that Marxism had never really resolved the fundamental problem of the relationship between nature and culture.'<sup>261</sup> Birtwhistle says 'certain of his perspectives and themes invite comparison with those of men like Wilhelm Reich, Satre, and Henri Lefebvre.'<sup>262</sup> He writes in the context of Marx and Freud, Marx and existentialism and Marx and life-oriented philosophies, Jorn's efforts appear

less isolated. Referring to Mark Poster and existential marxism he writes 'the new streams had far from resolved characters in the 1940s and Jorn's theories could be said to share in the unresolved tensions as well as the openness to exploration of those years.'<sup>263</sup> He suggests some connections with Herbert Read in England, who Jorn criticises, and tentatively, with the ICA's cross-disciplinary symposium 'Aspects of Form' in 1951.<sup>264</sup>

Birtwhistle writes that Jorn's early arguments are comparatively simplistic ontological arguments. They bring much more complexity in the 50s, with his consideration of contra-natural aspects and his move away from an organic basis for architecture and design.<sup>265</sup> Jorn himself describes the manuscripts as disconnected and unresolved.<sup>266</sup> Nonetheless the early work is interesting thematically. In the *Helhesten* journal that preceded *Cobra's* journal in Denmark in the forties, and included academic contributions by an archaeologist, architect, a psychologist and artists among them, Jorn 'pursued an investigation into basic problems of artistic form and experience, taking questions in contemporary art and architecture back to the level of first principles and fundamentals relating to man and his environment.'<sup>267</sup> The *Helhesten* approach as Dahlmann Olsen its editor and an architect clarified was not to advocate a modern art based on primitive art, it was to unite the work of academics and artists in probing deeper into '...the conceptions and patterns of living that were concealed behind the 'object'-world of these

peoples.'<sup>268</sup> A diversity of interest in art and academia in the 30s and the 40s, Birtwhistle acknowledges, led to an interdisciplinary interest in primitivism. He refers for example to its uses in Jean Piaget's psychological account of the 'The Child's Conception' of the World.' As well as to Freud's pervasive use of the primitive in the context of psychoanalytical theory, especially Freud's 'Civilisation and its Discontents,' which was widely acknowledged as a diagnosis of aspects of modern primitivism. Clearly Jorn was building on the perspectives of the Helhesten' circle, but also developing his own interests.

### **Situated collaborations, events and art and architecture in Cobra and Post-Cobra**

Among the doodles, and the experiments, Cobra depicted a spirit of optimism. For some, there was a belief in something better. They shared a common idealism. 'The Cobra movement belonged typically to those very few years just after the Second World War in which the Cold War was virtually unnoticeable. It illustrated and expressed in its spontaneity and Utopian way of thinking that brief moment when optimism still persisted; the fact that, even in the prospectlessness of a shattered world, wild expectations of a near future could still be cherished.'<sup>269</sup> There was a shared sense of the future. The thinkers did not have a political programme. Nor, it seemed a road map. Yet their intuitions and ideas do suggest a terrain of sorts.

Intuitions, or an outlook - they can't really call them more than that - about the future, a set of values and qualities. Political preoccupations, though perhaps not for Constant, were placed in second place to artistic activity. There are also important qualitative and down-to-earth facets of their intuitions. Jorn in *Petit Cobra 2* says: '(a)rt must have national roots and international life...The Nation, for us in Cobra, is not an affair of government or police, army and customs. The Nation is an affair of the population, of these people. The artist's surest way is to support what he has of his own of these qualities.'<sup>270</sup> And 'They did not want endless deliberation about theory and aesthetics, they wanted art to be absorbed into the normal process of living.'<sup>271</sup> They practised 'inter-specialisation;' architecture for example, 'was featured from the first issue of *Cobra* onwards.'<sup>272</sup> He says 'After the war, numerous artists dreamed of an indivisible creative force, neither organised or disorganised, where form and content would be combined, the end and the means, ugliness and beauty, design and colour, subjective power and the references to external reality.'<sup>273</sup> Or for Dotremont; 'We are iconoclasts when necessary, painters when it suits us.'<sup>274</sup>

Constant's polemics are fiery and 'wild.' He was the most radical member and the future for him was an important part of his political thinking. In the manifesto he discusses it in combative and revolutionary terms, though tempered, somewhat, by reference to art movements as well. 'A new freedom

is coming into being which will enable human beings to express themselves in accordance with their instincts.' And '...a new freedom can be won from the most primary source of life.'<sup>275</sup> He writes 'Our art...is the expression of a life force that is all the stronger for being resisted, and of considerable psychological significance in the struggle to establish a new society.'<sup>276</sup> 'A first-rate dialectician, Constant here further radicalised his position; but as he would vehemently repeat, it was not a 'revolution,' but a 'Liberation' to which he intended to contribute.'<sup>277</sup>

There were ideas, or as Dotrement says, confusions. There were art-led and collaborative experiments. This included something as simple as a painted cupboard. There was an informal move towards art and architecture, murals, and a civic art. The Dutch and the Danes were preoccupied with the formulation of an aesthetic corresponding to their works. Before Cobra, Jorn had been involved in ideas about art and architecture, painting the interior of a house –the Pancake House in 1943, Heerup and Jacobsen were also there. This method was realised again when a number of artists painted the walls of a nursery school in Copenhagen in 1944.<sup>278</sup> Constant, in the Summer of 1949 in Denmark, worked on a decorated relief in cement on the outside wall of the home of a poet Jørgen Nash. Corneille, Appel, and Constant decorated Eric Nyholm's house in Silkeborg, November 1949, in Denmark (see illustrations). Appel, produced a painting for the town hall dining room in







The architects' house at Bregnerød, near Copenhagen, where the Cobra members spent the summer of 1949 (mid-August to mid-September) together and painted the interior. Everyone took part, even the children.

The fireplace wall was painted by Stephen Gilbert, while Jorn moulded two arms "embracing the flames" over the fireplace itself, which was shaped like an enormous nose.

In the living room (facing the fireplace), Jorn painted the left-hand wall.

The right-hand wall was painted by Carl-Henning Pedersen, while the door was painted by Klaus Jorn's seven-year-old son.

The painted ceiling of the architects' house at Bregnerød, August/September 1949. The diagram shows the names of the artists: Anders Österlin (1-5, 14-15); Carl Otton Hultén (6, 11); Alfred H. Lilliendahl (8, 10); Asger Jorn (12); Carl-Henning Pedersen (13); Erling Jørgensen (16); Mogens Balle (17). Restored in 1969, this ceiling is now housed in the Art Society, Lyngby, Denmark.

3. Appel, Constant and Corneille painted the interior of the house of the trout farmer and potter Erik Nyholm at Funder, near Silkeborg (Denmark), in November 1949. a) In the room with the wash basin and mirror, the left-hand wall was painted by Appel, the rear wall and the furthest part of the right-hand wall by Corneille. b) The large animal figures on the right-hand wall are by Constant.
- c) Constant also painted a wall and the ceiling in another room.
- d) The wall to the right of this, with its door, was done by Appel. On the lintel they signed their names: Constant, Corneille, Appel, 30 November 1949.



3b



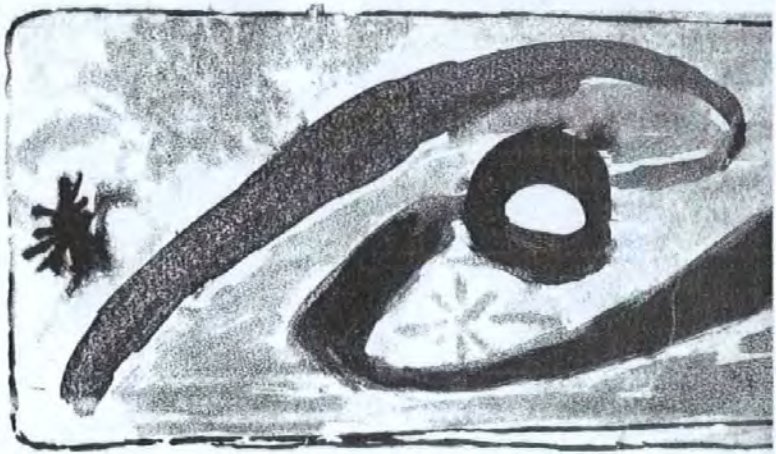
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3d



Pierre Alechinsky, *Sun at Mourlot's*, 1950.  
Lithograph (15 x 32 cm).



Alechinsky, painted cupboard at the Ateliers du Marais, Brussels (since destroyed). Photo Roland d'Ursel, Brussels.

INTERNATIONALE DES ARTISTES  
COBRA Revue bimestrielle de l'  
COBRA Informations/LA BIBLI  
COBRA Encyclopédie permanente de  
10, rue de la Paille, Bruxelles  
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE  
COBRA - FILMS  
80, rue du Marais, Bruxelles

Don't be so, belle de m  
dans ta l'obscurité  
quand on nous rend  
on y va brilles 'm  
don't l'obscurité  
grand ~~un~~ l'entente de  
bruit de la sang contre  
ma temps

Notre univers d'autre  
mille l'entente de  
quelles mites

Headed paper used by the  
Brussels Cobra group, with  
the draft of a poem by  
Christian Dotremont.

Amsterdam called 'Questioning Children.' Its depiction of misery caused a storm of protest and the council covered it in wood, though did not erase it. Dotremont discussed it in *Petit Cobra 3* in terms of the control of art and artistic freedom. Sarcastically he suggests the council look to social realist muralists who would more likely discuss the role of the subject in a painting than stir the emotions. A tract, 'a call to the imagination' was published in response by Aldo van Eyck.<sup>279</sup>

In the late 1950s Cobra art came to be integrated into the European art scene, partially under the Italian patronage of Maronetti. From 1959 on, Maronetti 'organised a series of great exhibitions at the 'International Centre of Art and Costume' in a Venetian Palace, all of which were epoch making.'<sup>280</sup> Cobra members were involved as were those described "by what Michaux called in his catalogue, 'the passion for the profligacy of liberty'. These included Michaux himself, Dubuffet, Bram van Velde, and also Jackson Pollock, De Kooning, Alan Davie, Moreni, Vedova, Sonderberg, and Saura."<sup>281</sup> Apart from the remarkable mix of artists, Maronetti, draws some important threads, writing Cobra art encapsulated 'the germs of a personalized community.' He writes that '...Cobra represented the spirit of a change which illuminated a substance, whose forms and purposes need restating. Cobra was a movement of habit in the most intimate and general sense...'

At Bregnerød, in the summer of 1949, there was a gathering of artists that 'could be said to be the zenith of the great international interaction of the Cobra movement.'<sup>282</sup> It was referred to as 'the first international Cobra Congress' though in effect it was a project for poets, artists, and children to decorate the house. Dotremont says: 'At Bregnerød it was impossible to see any contradiction at all: experimentation was in full flood...Bregnerød was the centre of the spiral.'<sup>283</sup> Non-painters painted and non-sculptors sculpted (see illustrations). Though he also says it was different from the formalism of international groups that had become fashionable: 'no green baize or red carpets there, we played practical jokes, great practical jokes, made puns...'<sup>284</sup> Cobra's sense of collaborative fun was important. 'One of our most total experiments' Dotremont describes it, '...They integrated work *and* holidays, art and life. About 15 artists set about decorating the house in 'a 'Cobra Babel experiment'. 'The non-painters painted and the non-sculptors sculpted...the non-poets wrote.'<sup>285</sup>

It is possible to see at Bregnerød in the summer of 1949, among the others experiments, some similar seeds of future ideas and tensions in architecture and the built environment. However as with all such gatherings, individual artists took from it a different set of concerns, or attributed to it a different set of significances. One of the more complex set of currents that led out of Cobra is best evidenced by the future directions of two of its members: Jorn



# COLLECTIVE WORKS



1a



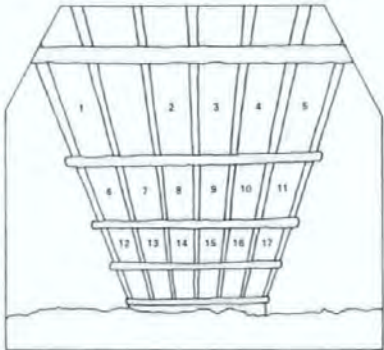
1b



1c



1d





and Constant (and arguably the architect Aldo van Eyck, who was peripherally involved with Cobra). Though Jorn too remained an important ceramist and painter. Given the future directions of other Cobra artists - some of them becoming famous artists in their own right - the deepening of Cobra's formal language was one of its significant contributions. Yet despite the fact that the Surrealist attempts as far back as the 1920s to fuse art and life had been abandoned, the fundamental tensions that emerged in new Cobra contexts were to be considered and developed in their own unique, though unresolved terms. These contexts can also begin to be reconsidered in original ways, in retrospect, through some of the more recent developments of thought in visual culture, everyday studies and cultural theory.

Stokvis emphasises in her 3 dimensional enquiry of Cobra the formal connections between the artist and the material, specifically the importance and aspect of primitivism for Cobra art.<sup>286</sup> However while there was evidence of conflict between Cobra members after the movement ended, 'they did stand together in refuting art historical judgements of the 1960s and 1970s that identified the most significant achievement of Cobra as its primitivist iconography and style of painting: the 'language of Cobra.'<sup>287</sup> Arguably it was the breadth of connections and processes that Cobra were fathoming that contributed to the diversity of interpretation, the artists own revisions, and to historiographical disputes. Nonetheless in the configurations

of a Cobra pictorial language it is productive connections, events, and histories outside of a traditional art historical synthesis that have been marginalised. For example 'Cobra art' marginalises a different set of themes and connections in Cobra that developed in Italy immediately after Cobra's demise in 1951. It is difficult to reduce Cobra's interest in creativity and folk art, in visual culture and events, in ideas and collective contexts, in house painting and civic art to a primitivist or pictorial aesthetic. It also disconnects with practices and a history that developed immediately after Cobra in Italian ceramics, international events, the urban, and murals that is different from its pictorial and sculptural history.

### **Post Cobra and situated collaborations**

Constant and Jorn 'fulminated against those who were intriguing to keep Cobra of 1948 alive and 'eternally youthful.''<sup>288</sup> Although it may be worth keeping in mind that Constant's polemic against 'Cobra art' may also have been inflected by his own move away from painting and his engagement with the Situationists. Nonetheless Birtwhistle writes that for Constant and Jorn 'Cobra art' as 'experimental research' had announced its own dissolution in 1951. Birtwhistle also states 'the influence of Cobra was not limited to the three countries where it originated –Denmark, Belgium and Holland. In Italy, for example, a sequel to Cobra was launched in 1954, when Asger Jorn settled in the little town of Albisola, in order to experiment with ceramics at

the Mazzotti factory.' Jorn was joined by Appel, Corneille among others and 'soon they were collaborating on various artistic projects (see illustrations).'<sup>289</sup>

In 1949 Dotremont had been in touch with artists in Florence, centred on the magazine *numero*, where although he found it eclectic he found parallels with Cobra. A number of these artists from Milan, Enrico Baj and Sergio Dangelo, also became involved in the sequel to Cobra.<sup>290</sup> It was after the demise of Cobra that Jorn travelled to Italy, to Albisola, where he made links with Enrico Baj, and the Italian *nucleari* movement, 'and even planned a collaboration between it and his own *Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste*' the M.I.B.I. (or I.M.I.B. in English).<sup>291</sup> The IMIB was launched in 1953. 'The initiative was applauded by Baj and Dangelo and by former Cobra members Alechinsky, Appel, K.O.Götz, and Anders Österlin.'<sup>292</sup> Jorn, at Albisola, set about learning and developing his formal experiments with ceramic work. He also built a garden there.

In 1954 Jorn organised an international manifestation of the I.M.I.B. This meeting was reminiscent of the old Cobra events, and features experiments in ceramics. In addition to Italian artists, Appel and Corneille were there, The Chilean Matta, the writer Theodor Koenig, from Belgium, and Jaguar and Giguère from France. In 1955 fresh experiments were set up with plates



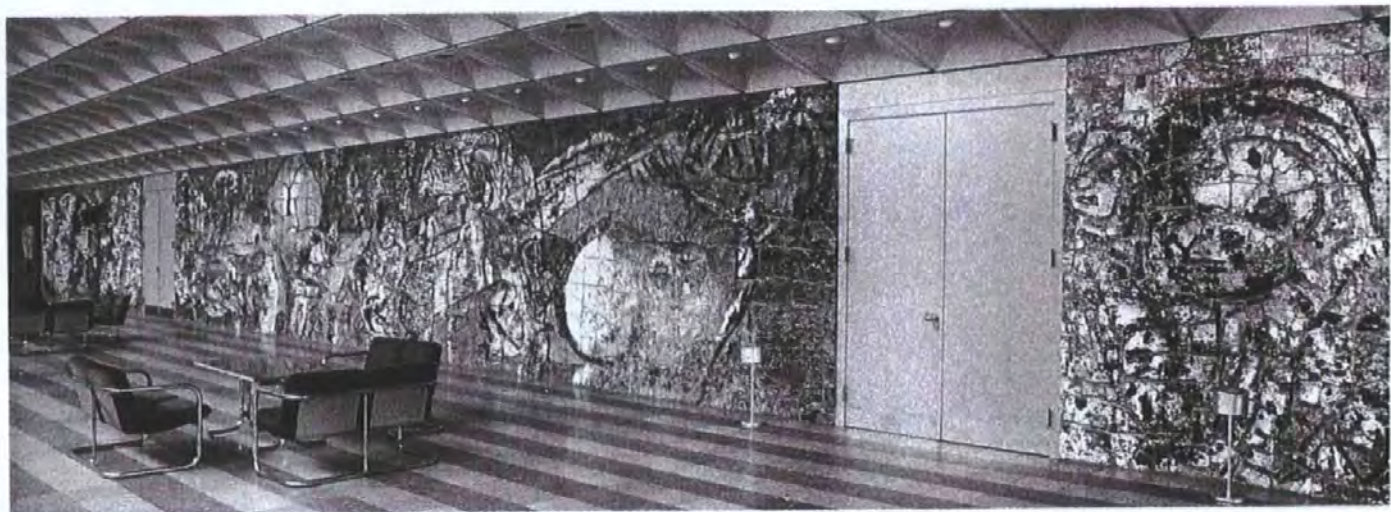


Albisola, Summer 1954. Left to right: Roberto Matta and Malitte, Asger Jorn, Corneille. Photo Henny Riemens, Paris.

Asger Jorn in Mazotti's pottery, Albisola, Summer 1954.  
Photo Henny Riemens.







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decorated by children and a special exhibition featuring the work of Corneille, Appel, Jorn and Matta.<sup>293</sup> In 1955 Jorn met Pino Gallizio and they founded a laboratory for the IMIB. At the international congress held in Alba in September 1956 participants from eight different nationalities met 'and agreed upon the importance of creating an urban environment which would in all its respects meet the needs of its residents, an ideal they called 'unitary urbanism.'<sup>294</sup> Constant who was representing Holland had stayed in Alba that summer, and at Gallizio's request designed a structure for a permanent gypsy camp nearby. 'This design was to be the cornerstone of Constant's city of the future, his New Babylon.'<sup>295</sup> Jorn fervently debated with Max Bill, who had opened a new Bauhaus in Ulm, that painting should be taught there, and that the Bauhaus was an artistic inspiration. 'Jorn was attempting to state an aesthetic which was relevant not only to artistic activity but also to what could be called the 'framework of life': architecture; urban planning, the environment, decoration.'<sup>296</sup> Birtwhistle writes, 'thus it was that following the voluntary dissolution of Cobra, Italy became the arena in which its utopian ideas were aired, albeit in different forms and in different names.'<sup>297</sup> Nevertheless he mentions that it was the infectious vitality of the work that impressed the Italians rather than the world-shattering ideas, manifestos and heated discussions.

Jorn's post Cobra work, is called by Atkins 'The Crucial Years 1954-62,' principally as a result of Jorn's emergence as major figure in European Art during that time.<sup>298</sup> The important landmarks at this time are listed by Atkins as 'The *Stalingrad* picture, the Aarhus Mural and the great radiant paintings which include among others, *Letter to my son*, *Attention Danger*, *Half-moon*, *Re-encounter on the shores of Death*.'<sup>299</sup> Jorn worked on the gigantic Aarhus mural in 1959 for a secondary school, and *Letter to my son* was considered one of Jorn's masterpieces by Atkins. While Constant's work in the 1950s, as already mentioned included *Gypsy encampment* for Gallizio. However his move into a realm of architecture and unitary urbanism in the 1950s is examined further in the next chapter in terms of his connections with Henri Lefebvre.

Nevertheless, a remarkable diversity of work set in motion different sets of processes that emerged out of Cobra. Dotrement's emphasis on collaborative work in Cobra, Cobra's pictorial and sculptural languages, Cobra events, or developments in realms of the urban, cannot be fully encompassed in terms of a traditional aesthetic. The holding of an experimental and unresolved scope of tensions both in a traditional and outside of a formal aesthetic is an important part of the Cobra achievement. Its realm complicated though did not resolve notions of an individual aesthetic in new and interesting ways. Highlighting these productive relations, their developing concepts and



practices, helps to bring to the fore thematic tensions and histories that are relevant to the problems and values of a re-objectification within art history and to the distinctions of guiding rationales and possibilities in contemporary discourses.

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<sup>1</sup> Stokvis, W. (1987), *Cobra: An International Movement in Art after the Second World War*; Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, S. A.; page 12.

<sup>2</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra: Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam*, exh. cat., National Touring Exhibitions; London: Hayward Gallery Publishing; note 29, page 30. Birtwhistle gives an account of the disagreements between Constant, Dotremont and Stokvis in an English summary of a German article that was first published in Dutch. See article in the Dutch art historical magazine in Birtwhistle, G. (1988), 'Cobra: Polemik, Rezeption, Nachleben,' in *Jong Holland*, vol. 4, no 5, page 40.

<sup>3</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1988), *Cobra*; p.40.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, page 39.

<sup>5</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; page 28.

<sup>6</sup> For a very short resumé of the pre-Cobra period and of the three groups see Shield, P, 'A Short History of Cobra' in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*.

<sup>7</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra: The Last Avant-Garde Movement of the Twentieth Century*; Aldershot, U.K. and Burlington, USA.: Lund Humphries; p. 145.

<sup>8</sup> See Stokvis, W. (1988), 'A Cobra Chronology' in Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra: 40 years after*; SDU publishers - Sdu uitgeverij; pps.32-33. Or Shields, P: 'A Cobra Chronology' in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003) *Cobra* p.16-18.

<sup>9</sup> See Shield, P, 'The Cobra Exhibitions in Amsterdam and Liège' in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003) *Cobra*; p.31.

<sup>10</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; page 13.

<sup>11</sup> See the comprehensive list of references, by artist, in Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; London and New Jersey: Sotheby Publications, or for a brief biography of each of the principle artists see Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*; pps.81-91.

<sup>12</sup> Some of the artists included: from Denmark (and alphabetically), Else Alfelt, Mogens Balle, Ejler Bille, Sonja Ferlov, Egill Jacobsen, Henry Heerup, Asger Jorn, Carl-Henning Pedersen, Erik Thommsen, Erik Ortvad: from Belgium, Pierre Alechinsky, Pol Bury, Hugo Claus, Georges Collignon, Jan Cox, Christian Dotremont, Marcel Havrenne, Luc de Heusch, Louis van Lint, Joseph Noiret, Jean Raine, Reinhoud, Raoul Ubac, Serge Vandercam; from Netherlands, Karel Appel, Eugene Brands, Constant Nieuwenhuys, Corneille, Jan G. Elburg, Gerrit Kouwenaar, Lucebert, Anton Rooskens, Bert Schierbeck, Tajiri Shinkichi (American of Japanese origin living in the Netherlands), Theo Wolvecamp, from France, Jean Michel Atlan, Jacques Doucet; from Germany, Karl Otto Gotz: from England, Stephen Gilbert and William Gear; from Iceland Svavar Gudnason; from Sweden, Carl Otto Hulten, Anders Osterlin, Max Svanberg, from Czechoslovakia, Joseph Istler, Zdenek Lorenc and Ludvic Kundera; from Johannesburg, Ernst Mancoba; from Hungary, Madeleine Kemeny and Zoltan Kemeny.

<sup>13</sup> Stokvis, W. (eds.) (1988), *Cobra*; p.96.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Sadler, S. (1998), *The Situationist City*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusettes and London England.

<sup>15</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.6.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid* p.6.

<sup>17</sup> There is an article about Stuijvenberg by Ed Wingen 'Cobra and I' pages 73-81 in Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*.

<sup>18</sup> See Wijnants, T, 'The B in Cobra' in Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*. In the context of journal pieces she writes 'Cobra is represented as almost exclusively a pictorial movement,

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but this excludes the Belgian contribution,' p.45. Also see C.E. van de Watering, 'Cobra and Literature,' in Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*.

<sup>19</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.28.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p.28.

<sup>21</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.28.

<sup>22</sup> Williamson, A. (1982) *Cobra 1948-51*, PhD dissertation, University of California at Berkeley; p.8.

<sup>23</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.71.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p.71.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid* p.82.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid* p.82.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* p.83.

<sup>28</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions: Work in wood, clay, metal, stone, plaster, waste, polyester, bread, ceramics*; London: Lund Humphries; p.95.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid* p.66.

<sup>30</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; page 32.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid* p.32.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* p.31.

<sup>33</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.34, drawings on pps. 42-43.

<sup>34</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.31.

<sup>35</sup> See Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; p.19.

<sup>36</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.31.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid* p.31.

<sup>38</sup> Williamson, A. (1982), *Cobra*; p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; page 57.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid* p.59.

<sup>41</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; pps.60-61.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid* p.37.

<sup>43</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.45.

<sup>44</sup> Atkins, G. with the help of Troels Andersen, (1968), *Jorn in Scandanavia 1930-53*, Vol. 1; London: Lund Humphries; p.63.

<sup>45</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.54.

<sup>46</sup> Atkins, G. (1968), *Jorn in Scandinavia*; p.67.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p.71.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* p.73.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid* p.64, figure 57.

<sup>50</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.8.

<sup>51</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.22.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid* p.22.

<sup>53</sup> See Birtwhistle, G. 'Behind the Primitivism in Cobra' in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.22.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid* page 22.

<sup>55</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; p.68.

<sup>56</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.35. 12 issues of *Helhesten* appeared between March 1941 and November 1944.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid* p.35.



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- <sup>58</sup> *ibid* p.79.
- <sup>59</sup> *ibid* p.209.
- <sup>60</sup> Lewis, H. (1990), *Dada turns Red: the Politics of Surrealism*, Edinburgh University Press; p.34.
- <sup>61</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.15.
- <sup>62</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.147.
- <sup>63</sup> Wijnants, T, 'The B in Cobra' in Stokvis, W (1988), *Cobra*; p. 45.
- <sup>64</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004) *Cobra*; p.147.
- <sup>65</sup> Lewis, H, (1990), *Dada turns Red*; p.18. Breton asked Freud to contribute some of his patient's dreams to a Surrealist publication. Freud replied that the manifest or superficial aspects of dreams did not interest him, it was their specific context that was important.
- <sup>66</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.16.
- <sup>67</sup> Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*; page 27.
- <sup>68</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.107
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid*, p.16.
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid*, p.107.
- <sup>71</sup> Page 7, Shield, P. (1998), *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life*. Ashgate. quoting theorist and artist Bjerke-Petersen.
- <sup>72</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.16. He met Picasso through Eluard.
- <sup>73</sup> *ibid* page 17. But most important of all he met, through Ubac, Gaston Bachelard, who was working on his major works on the 'material imagination' at the time.'
- <sup>74</sup> *ibid* page 21. Two Czechs attended: Zdenek Lorenc and Joseph Istler. And were critical of Surrealisms 'interior model'. Both were members of Skupina Ra that included artists, poets, photographers, and theorists. Lambert suggests they were another prefiguration of the Cobra Group. RA were the first letters of the town where one of its painters lived...
- <sup>75</sup> *ibid* p.21.
- <sup>76</sup> *ibid* p.23.
- <sup>77</sup> *ibid* p.23.
- <sup>78</sup> *ibid* p.23.
- <sup>79</sup> *ibid* p.23.
- <sup>80</sup> Introduction by Robert Malbert in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.10.
- <sup>81</sup> *ibid* p.10.
- <sup>82</sup> Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*; page 28.
- <sup>83</sup> *ibid* p.29.
- <sup>84</sup> *ibid* p.23.
- <sup>85</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.324.
- <sup>86</sup> *ibid* p.324/325.
- <sup>87</sup> Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*; p.28.
- <sup>88</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.115.
- <sup>89</sup> *ibid* p.16.
- <sup>90</sup> Stokvis, W. (eds) (1988), *Cobra*; p.121.
- <sup>91</sup> See 'Among the Stones' in Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p228, and 'Birds' in Stokvis, W. (1987) *Cobra*; p.88, among many others.
- <sup>92</sup> See 'The joyful rhythm of the city,' and 'Indigenous Village' in Stokvis, W. (1987), *Cobra*; p.90.
- <sup>93</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.43.

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- <sup>94</sup> *ibid* p.79.
- <sup>95</sup> See Birtwhistle, G, 'Behind the Primitivism of Cobra', in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.23. Birtwhistle also points out Jorn's '...natural morphology of art point(s) to the core of Jorn's particular brand of primitivism.' i.e. elements of it were particular to Jorn and not shared by the group.
- <sup>96</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.62.
- <sup>97</sup> *ibid* p.59.
- <sup>98</sup> *ibid* p.60.
- <sup>99</sup> *ibid* p.64.
- <sup>100</sup> *ibid* p.64.
- <sup>101</sup> *ibid* p.64.
- <sup>102</sup> *ibid* p.65.
- <sup>103</sup> *ibid* p.65.
- <sup>104</sup> *ibid* p.99.
- <sup>105</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.83, fig 105.
- <sup>106</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.240.
- <sup>107</sup> *ibid* p.154.
- <sup>108</sup> *ibid* p.274.
- <sup>109</sup> *ibid* p.278.
- <sup>110</sup> *ibid* pps.158-163.
- <sup>111</sup> *ibid* p.278.
- <sup>112</sup> *ibid* p.163.
- <sup>113</sup> See Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.13.
- <sup>114</sup> *ibid* p.9.
- <sup>115</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.239.
- <sup>116</sup> *ibid* p.239/240.
- <sup>117</sup> *ibid* p.256.
- <sup>118</sup> *ibid* p.26.
- <sup>119</sup> *ibid* p.32.
- <sup>120</sup> *ibid* p.252.
- <sup>121</sup> *ibid* p.294.
- <sup>122</sup> *ibid* p.298.
- <sup>123</sup> *ibid* p.11.
- <sup>124</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.114.
- <sup>125</sup> Stokvis (1998) p.20.
- <sup>126</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.62.
- <sup>127</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; p.28
- <sup>128</sup> For the significance of Cobra's three-dimensional work, See Stokvis, (1999), *Cobra 3 dimensions*.
- <sup>129</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.17.
- <sup>130</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.146.
- <sup>131</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.18 for example.
- <sup>132</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.194.
- <sup>133</sup> *ibid* p.146.
- <sup>134</sup> Williamson, A. (1982), *Cobra*; p.116.
- <sup>135</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; p.14.

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- <sup>136</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.17.
- <sup>137</sup> *ibid* p.18. This quote can also be found on page 1, in Bachelard, G, (1988), *Air and Dreams, An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1943], translated by E. and F. Farrel; Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications. The Chapter is called 'Imagination and Mobility' where Bachelard emphasises change and the imaginative act.
- <sup>138</sup> *ibid* p.18.
- <sup>139</sup> *ibid* p.9
- <sup>140</sup> *ibid* p.114 in reference to Bachelard's book *La Terre et les Rêveries de la Volonté*.
- <sup>141</sup> *ibid* p.18.
- <sup>142</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.146/147.
- <sup>143</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.16.
- <sup>144</sup> *ibid* p.62. Bachelard's quote is from page 10, Bachelard, G (1983), *Water and Dreams: An essay on the Imagination of Matter*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1942], translated by E. Farrel; Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications. Bachelard uses the word graft not simply as a metaphor. It is a concept essential for understanding human psychology. And he emphasises the organic nature of materialised images. 'It is the graft which can truly provide the material imagination with an exuberance of forms, which can transmit the richness and density of matter to formal imagination,' page 10.
- <sup>145</sup> *ibid* p.82.
- <sup>146</sup> Williamson, A. (1982,) *Cobra*, p.112 citing 'Discourse with the Penguins,' in *Cobra 1*, p.8.
- <sup>147</sup> *ibid* p.112.
- <sup>148</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.18.
- <sup>149</sup> *ibid* p.17.
- <sup>150</sup> Williamson, A. (1982), *Cobra*; p.89.
- <sup>151</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.18.
- <sup>152</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1986), *Living Art: Asger Jorn's comprehensive theory of art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946-1949)*; Utrecht: Reflex; p.217 in footnote 88,
- <sup>153</sup> *ibid* p.110.
- <sup>154</sup> *ibid* p.110/111.
- <sup>155</sup> *ibid* p.110.
- <sup>156</sup> *ibid* p.110.
- <sup>157</sup> *ibid* footnotes 87 and 88 on p.217 where he discusses some of Bachelard's influence further.
- <sup>158</sup> *ibid* p.115.
- <sup>159</sup> *ibid* p.115.
- <sup>160</sup> *ibid* p.117.
- <sup>161</sup> *ibid* p.117-118 for a translation of the piece.
- <sup>162</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; p.110.
- <sup>163</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.82.
- <sup>164</sup> *ibid* p.186.
- <sup>165</sup> *ibid* p.161.
- <sup>166</sup> *ibid* p.78. Huizinga's book on *Homo Ludens* was published in 1939
- <sup>167</sup> *ibid* p.82.
- <sup>168</sup> *ibid* p.107.
- <sup>169</sup> Atkins, G. with the help of Andersen, T. (1968), *Jorn in Scandinavia: 1930-53*, vol.1; London: Lund Humphries; p.87 quoted from an interview with Walter Korun.

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- <sup>170</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.134.
- <sup>171</sup> *ibid* p.107/110 (because of images).
- <sup>172</sup> Atkins, G. (1968), *Jorn in Scandnavia*; p.85.
- <sup>173</sup> *ibid* p.135.
- <sup>174</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.117.
- <sup>175</sup> *ibid* p.85.
- <sup>176</sup> Stokvis, W. (1987), *Cobra*; p.29.
- <sup>177</sup> Atkins, G. (1968), *Jorn in Scandinavia*; p.84.
- <sup>178</sup> *ibid* p.82.
- <sup>179</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.115.
- <sup>180</sup> *ibid* p.26.
- <sup>181</sup> *ibid* p.161.
- <sup>182</sup> *ibid* p.79.
- <sup>183</sup> *ibid* p.79.
- <sup>184</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.10.
- <sup>185</sup> 'As early as the end of WW1, the DADA movement tried by violent means to break away from the old ideal of beauty. Although this movement concentrated increasingly on the political arena...the vital power released by this confrontation also stimulated the birth of a new artistic vision...' in Constant's Manifesto. See Lambert, J-C. (1983) *Cobra*; p.98.
- <sup>186</sup> 'Our real motive was not rowdiness for its own sake, or contradiction and revolt in themselves, but the question (basic then, as it is now), "where next?"' Richter, H. (1965), *Dada Art and Anti-Art*; London: Thames and Hudson, p.9. Or Hugo Ball in his diary 5<sup>th</sup> May 1917 wrote: 'Art is for us an occasion for social criticism, and for a real understanding of the age we live in. These are essential for the creation of a characteristic style...Art everywhere stands in contradiction to its own ethical purpose. What are we to do?' His diaries were published after his death in 1927 under the title '*Flucht aus der Zeit*' and later published as Ball, H. (1996), *Flight from Time: A Dada Diary*, introduction by J. Elderfield, translated by A. Raimés; New York: Viking Press.
- <sup>187</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1988), 'Cobra'; p40.
- <sup>188</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.231.
- <sup>189</sup> *ibid* p.220, or p.228.
- <sup>190</sup> *ibid* p.153, for example Appel, Constant, Corneille, Svanberg, and Osterlin.
- <sup>191</sup> See Wijnants, T., 'The B in Cobra' in Stokvis, W. (1988) (eds.), *Cobra*. In the context of journal pieces she writes 'Cobra is represented as almost exclusively a pictorial movement, but this excludes the Belgian contribution.' p.45. Also see C.E. van de Watering, 'Cobra and Literature' in Stokvis, W. (1988) (eds.), *Cobra*.
- <sup>192</sup> *ibid* p.220.
- <sup>193</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.232.
- <sup>194</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.36.
- <sup>195</sup> *ibid* p.37, from the Helhesten article.
- <sup>196</sup> *ibid* p.63.
- <sup>197</sup> *ibid* p.20.
- <sup>198</sup> *ibid* p.19.
- <sup>199</sup> *ibid* p.20.
- <sup>200</sup> *ibid* p.20.
- <sup>201</sup> *ibid* p.19.

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- <sup>202</sup> ibid p.124/125.
- <sup>203</sup> ibid p.125.
- <sup>204</sup> ibid p.125.
- <sup>205</sup> ibid p.20.
- <sup>206</sup> ibid p.124.
- <sup>207</sup> ibid p.20
- <sup>208</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*; London and New York: Routledge. See Chapter 5, 'Moments of Presence'.
- <sup>209</sup> See Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*; London and New York: Routledge, and Highmore, B. (2000), *Everyday Life Reader*; London and New York: Routledge.
- <sup>210</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.114. Bury article in *Cobra 2*, about art and materiality.
- <sup>211</sup> ibid p.28.
- <sup>212</sup> ibid p.97.
- <sup>213</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.221.
- <sup>214</sup> ibid p.220 for example.
- <sup>215</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.124.
- <sup>216</sup> ibid p.124.
- <sup>217</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.82.
- <sup>218</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.20.
- <sup>219</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.171.
- <sup>220</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; page 20. (Or Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.68).
- <sup>221</sup> ibid p.20.
- <sup>222</sup> Birtwhistle, G. 'Behind the Primitivism in Cobra' in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., *Cobra*: (2003) National Touring Exhibitions, Hayward Gallery Publishing, pps.19-30.
- <sup>223</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.22,.
- <sup>224</sup> For example, Matisse and Orientalism, and his visit to the German ethnographic exhibition, or his visit to Tunisia. ibid p.22.
- <sup>225</sup> See Stokvis, W. (1999), 'Interest in Primitive art.' p.15, She also mentions articles in the journals, *Cahiers D'Art* and *Minotaure*.
- <sup>226</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.135.
- <sup>227</sup> ibid p.115.
- <sup>228</sup> ibid p.79
- <sup>229</sup> ibid p.24
- <sup>230</sup> ibid p.24.
- <sup>231</sup> ibid p.24.
- <sup>232</sup> ibid p.24.
- <sup>233</sup> ibid p.24.
- <sup>234</sup> ibid p.24.
- <sup>235</sup> ibid p.24.
- <sup>236</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*: p.149.
- <sup>237</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.114/115.
- <sup>238</sup> ibid p.68.
- <sup>239</sup> ibid p.111.
- <sup>240</sup> ibid p.160.

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- <sup>241</sup> *ibid* p.107.
- <sup>242</sup> *ibid* p.41.
- <sup>243</sup> *ibid* p.123.
- <sup>244</sup> *ibid* p. 115.
- <sup>245</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1986), *Living Art*; p.74 quoted from Jorn.
- <sup>246</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.32.
- <sup>247</sup> *ibid* p.218.
- <sup>248</sup> *ibid* p.218.
- <sup>249</sup> *ibid* p.20.
- <sup>250</sup> *ibid* p.64.
- <sup>251</sup> *ibid* p.28.
- <sup>252</sup> *ibid* p.28.
- <sup>253</sup> Birtwhistle, G, 'Behind the Primitivism of Cobra' in Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.22.
- <sup>254</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1986), *Living Art*; p.6.
- <sup>255</sup> *ibid* p.45 and 49.
- <sup>256</sup> *ibid* p.39.
- <sup>257</sup> *ibid* p.48.
- <sup>258</sup> *ibid* p.40.
- <sup>259</sup> *ibid* p.101 Birtwhistle referencing Lunbderg 'Ten Lectures on Swedish Architecture.'
- <sup>260</sup> *ibid* p.106. Niels Ahrbom's survey page 105.
- <sup>261</sup> *ibid* p.12
- <sup>262</sup> *ibid* p.41
- <sup>263</sup> *ibid* p.41, (from Poster, M. (1975), *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Satre to Althusser*; Princeton, NJ,: Princeton University Press).
- <sup>264</sup> *ibid* p.41. Anecdotally, see also Massey, A. (1995), *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1949-59*; Manchester University Press. E.L.T. Mesens, a Belgian surrealists who was known to Belgian Surrealists of pre-Cobra, was one of three signatories of a 1946 letter, calling for a Museum of Modern Art, including Penrose and Read. This was a few years before the founding of the Independent group. In a history of the Independent Group, Massey begins with the end of high modernism and the furore caused by the prize money for one of the works by William Gear for the 1951 festival of Britain that reached the Houses of Parliament. Gear's Autumn Landscape (1950) was different to the other neo romantic and lyrical landscapes. The chapter says Gear had spent three years working in Paris, and spent time abroad. Though she does not say that Gear was one of the 50 or so members of Cobra, and returned to Britain in 1950. See page 14, Massey (1995) about Gear.
- <sup>265</sup> *ibid* p.110.
- <sup>266</sup> *ibid* p.13.
- <sup>267</sup> *ibid* p.10.
- <sup>268</sup> *ibid* p.23. Birtwhistle referencing Olsen.
- <sup>269</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.239.
- <sup>270</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.129.
- <sup>271</sup> Stokvis, W. (1987), *Cobra*; p.12
- <sup>272</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.110.
- <sup>273</sup> *ibid* p.24.



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- <sup>274</sup> ibid p.129.
- <sup>275</sup> Stokvis, W. (1987), *Cobra*; p.29
- <sup>276</sup> ibid p.30.
- <sup>277</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.79.
- <sup>278</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.140.
- <sup>279</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.153.
- <sup>280</sup> ibid p.212.
- <sup>281</sup> ibid p.213.
- <sup>282</sup> Stokvis, W. (2004), *Cobra*; p.200.
- <sup>283</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.126. There were however significant personal difficulties. Constant's wife had left him and decided to live with Jorn. Appel and Corneille in solidarity with Constant refused to go to Bregnerod.
- <sup>284</sup> ibid p.128.
- <sup>285</sup> ibid p.128.
- <sup>286</sup> Stokvis, W. (1999), *Cobra 3 Dimensions*; p.10. She stresses the relationship between art and material as an aspect of primitivism, and fundamental to the emergence of modern art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- <sup>287</sup> Shield, P. and Birtwhistle, G. et. al., (2003), *Cobra*; p.28. See also ibid, page 30, note 29.
- <sup>288</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1988), 'Cobra'; p.40.
- <sup>289</sup> ibid p.39.
- <sup>290</sup> ibid p.39.
- <sup>291</sup> Atkins, G. (1980), *Asger Jorn: The Final Years 1965-73*; London: Lund Humphries; p.88.
- <sup>292</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1988), 'Cobra'; p.39.
- <sup>293</sup> ibid p.39.
- <sup>294</sup> ibid p.39.
- <sup>295</sup> ibid p.39.
- <sup>296</sup> Lambert, J-C. (1983), *Cobra*; p.209.
- <sup>297</sup> Birtwhistle, G. (1988) 'Cobra'; p.39
- <sup>298</sup> ibid p.10.
- <sup>299</sup> ibid p.11.

## **Volume Two**

# **Henri Lefebvre's Radical Romanticism: Lived Moments and Lived Time in Art and Architecture**

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## **Henri Lefebvre's Radical Romanticism: Lived Moments and Lived Time in Art and Architecture**

### **Introduction**

This chapter continues the theme of human agency and lived time. It examines in original ways how the lived might be understood through Lefebvre's radical romanticism, specifically in terms of his contacts with art movements. These themes include creativity, moments and the everyday, lived time, and architecture and the future. The chapter also extends in facets of Lefebvre's presentation of a radical romanticism a set of links - critical, methodological and thematic - that set up interesting sets of productive tensions with Cobra practices and ideas.

Lefebvre's interest in a radical romanticism surfaces again and again throughout his life. This includes Literature, painting, and aesthetics and Lefebvre draws on Dada and Surrealism.<sup>1</sup> Shields writes Lefebvre's reading of Marx relied on a notion of Marx as a fundamentally Romantic writer and that Nietzsche's notion of the tragic could be linked to a romantic esprit du temps. In Lefebvre's roots in the tragic and in the horror of the gap between signifiers and reality, Shields suggests, 'he is perhaps closest to Walter Benjamin.'<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre refers to, and writes about, artists and architects, music and aesthetics.<sup>3</sup> For example he taught a course on Music and Society.<sup>4</sup>

'What we find in Nietzsche is a replacement of philosophical rationality and scientific historicity with art, particularly tragedy and music. Art is at the centre of knowledge.'<sup>5</sup> Music and listening is a central reference point for his ideas about rhythm.<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre's interest in Literature meant he wrote about Musset, Brecht, Rabelais, and Stendhal, though, Shields mentions he was not an influential literary theorist.<sup>7</sup> Given that Lefebvre's writing about Philosophy, Literature, Art, and Music, is itself wide ranging, the essay focuses principally on connections with art, aesthetics and architecture. In order to flesh out Lefebvre's thinking about a radical romanticism and the lived it examines his links with art movements. These include the Dadaists, Surrealists, the Cobra artist Constant, and the early Situationists. While there is not equivalence between Lefebvre and art groups or art, an interesting set of connections can be charted in terms of his writing to explore their commonalities, and their differentiation. This then emphasises themes at particular moments of Lefebvre's career and it situates ideas about Lefebvre relative to vectors of thinking in art, and in art history.

In terms of connections that can be made about Lefebvre and art groups or art theoretical realms in the existing literature Shields looks to Dadaists and Surrealists in a chapter about Lefebvre's understanding of the theory of moments. Lebas and Kofman focus on a wide range of writings by and about Lefebvre that includes his writings about the body, the tragic, and the urban.<sup>8</sup>

They also have written about the connections of Constant's architecture and Lefebvre's theory of moments.<sup>9</sup> Elden reconsiders the centrality of spatiality and temporality in Lefebvre's work and, in terms of the latter, its non-Marxist provenances of time that include Heidegger, Nietzsche, Proust, and Bachelard. He discusses notions of production that include artworks and cities. Elden also writes 'one of the most significant sources for Lefebvre's work on space,' is an essay about an artist, Edouard Pignon, a contemporary of Picasso. Elden says 'What we find in the analysis of Pignon is therefore both an interest in space as an aesthetic experience, and an understanding of how it is always related to questions of temporality.'<sup>10</sup> Pignon, by no means a central figure, was also of some influence to the Dutch and Belgian artists in Cobra.<sup>11</sup> Elden and Shields both mention the centrality of a vision of Lefebvre's - the message of the crucified sun - and its relevance for his work. Highmore explores the everyday in Lefebvre's work, and makes references to the Surrealists and Situationists.<sup>12</sup> Wander, in his introduction to *Everyday Life in the Modern World* mentions the contribution of Lefebvre as a theorist of the everyday and a utopianist.<sup>13</sup> Finally Lefebvre's chapter on 'Towards a New Romanticism' spells out some of his ideas specifically about art and aesthetics. It includes a mock interview that helps to frame his thinking.<sup>14</sup>

### **Contextualising Lefebvre and the Lived – rethinking time with space**

Lefebvre's work has been revitalised over the last 20 years or so, in the Anglophone world, principally as a philosophy about the nature of space. *The Production of Space* has had a significant impact in the English speaking world. *The Reassertion of Space in the Critical Social Theory*, as the subtitle of Soja's previous works makes plain, has been an enriching theme.<sup>15</sup> Another Soja work, *Thirdspace* begins with a personal introduction to, and praise for, Lefebvre's thinking.<sup>16</sup> However it has, in some of the most prominent interpreters of Lefebvre's work been given a specifically post-modern and geographic frame. Or in Soja terms a socio-spatial frame.<sup>17</sup> It is primarily to *The Production of Space* that they refer. Similarly, Lefebvre is sighted as one of the principle sources by Soja for the assault *against* time and historicism – Lefebvre is 'the primary source for the assault against historicism and the reassertion of space in critical social theory.'<sup>18</sup>

A reading of Lefebvre's radical romanticism through moments and lived time has been assembled from a number of contexts and ideas in Lefebvre's work. Broadly, lived time thinks through a range of ideas and comments about the lived qualities of time. Shields says "Lefebvre has been assimilated much more as a geographer /political economist and even semiotician than as a philosopher of dialectics with one of the greatest ranges of all twentieth century theorists."<sup>19</sup> He describes Lefebvre's 'projective-retrojective'



research method for considering the past with the present 'as a significant contribution to the toolkit of critical theory.'<sup>20</sup> He researches the philosophical provenances of Lefebvre the dialectician. He writes that Lefebvre considered the everyday as his main contribution to the social sciences. Highmore, in the context of everyday studies, says "Cultural geography's account of Lefebvre has (not unexpectedly) often resulted in the privileging of his more explicit geographical work at the expense of a general understanding of his work as a critique of everyday life."<sup>21</sup> Shields mentions that this professional interest also explains for an English-speaking audience that a 'major foci of Lefebvre's *oeuvre* such as the Theory of Moments appear to his English readers as fringe elements.'<sup>22</sup> In contemporary terms Lefebvre's influence is articulated by a range of authors from, in simple terms, post-modern geography (Soja) to art and a geographic visual culture (Rogoff), art and spatial politics (Deutsche), spatial dialectics and sociology (Shields), to philosophy, politics and Marxism (Elden, Lebas, and Kofman).<sup>23</sup>

In a collection of translated works by Lefebvre, *Writing Cities*, Lebas and Kofman say: 'What we end up with is the crowning of space at the expense of an impoverished historical understanding and simplification of the richness of temporalities, and their significance for lived experience in different places and by different social groups.'<sup>24</sup> They point out the limited

number of translations of his work into English - about a handful.<sup>25</sup> Yet 'In the 1960s he was the second most translated intellectual,' though clearly not into English.<sup>26</sup> In *Writing Cities* they have chosen a range of work to 'redress a balance in translation of his writing' and are guided by two considerations: one is the urban; and the other 'to raise questions about the conceptualisation of the city, the rights of its citizens and, articulations of time, space and the everyday.'<sup>27</sup> Especially relevant then are the linked articulations of space, time and the everyday. The title for their introduction, 'Lost in transposition – Time, Space and the City,' again emphasises space and time. More subtly, they say it reflects a modification of a title by Eva Hoffman *Lost in Translation*. Hoffman recounts 'as someone who migrated from Poland to Canada at the age of thirteen years, the acquisition of a language and new forms of social relations.' This is what they call *Transposition*: and it 'stemmed from the fact that we wanted to give a stronger sense of changing places and contexts than might be conveyed by the term translation.'<sup>28</sup> The everyday, space and time, and transposition.

This re-introduces a lived dimension of time - ideas about lived experience and time - into debates of thinking about Lefebvre's work. Soja says it is time that has been pushed into the background and the highlighting of it that has been so problematic. The linear and 'progressive' notions of time, whether in philosophical, historical, or binary constructions, have been those

factors erasing differences, erasing questions about power or textures of space. In some contexts Massey argues it continues to do so.<sup>29</sup> Deutsche eloquently features some of the fundamental limitations of a Marxist and dialectical materialist reading of art and representation.<sup>30</sup> Yet she also raises eloquently the problems of ignoring history and spatiality in Art. Irit Rogoff considers the importance of belonging and unbelonging in some ways similar to a problematics of transposition though in a visual cultural and geographic interpretation of art. Yet they all, in different ways, reference Lefebvre's writings. Elden, a Lefebvre scholar, highlights Lefebvre and temporality though is cautious of doing so given social theorist's traditional obsession with time. Yet importantly he points out Lefebvre does not fall back on Marxist notions of time but on a different set of theoretical provenances, that include, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Proust, and Bachelard. Given Lefebvre's fascination for space, and his wariness of historicism, his thinking about time is complex and insightful. Although he is adamant about the relevance of time to space: "When we evoke 'time', we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction, likewise energy and time."<sup>31</sup> Yet he writes "The standing of time as it relates to space is problematic and has yet to be defined clearly."<sup>32</sup>

Lefebvre's radical romanticism is introduced through four strands of thinking: the centrality of poiesis or creativity; the everyday; the relevance of

lived time: and the creation of the future or the possible. Rather than better known interpretations of Lefebvre's about space, the chapter charts an emphasis on time - for example, oeuvres (works) and the present, lived time and the past, or the urban possible and the future, that includes its practices and contexts. So time in this chapter is not considered only in abstract philosophical terms or in contrast with space, but is imbricated with the particular, in terms of specific actions, contexts and practices. It also considers the relevance of an interaction of a critical thinking with particular contexts that Lefebvre called metaphilosophy. Ideas about Lefebvre's radical romanticism approach a cross section of lived and critical currents within the dialectical material. Importantly these currents do not focus on the problems of the dialectic as such, but on certain facets of connections within it and their modes of understanding and practice. It thereby interprets only a portion of Lefebvre's thinking within dialectical materialism.

### **Poiesis (creativity), agency and aesthetics: Dada, Surrealism, and Romanticism**

'In terms of outlining possibilities Lefebvre draws on the model for creativity' and 'treats art as a harbinger of an alternative world' stressing, in formal terms, 'dialogue and cooperative activity.'<sup>33</sup> He brings together in one phrase, 'man's creative activity, his essence, his individuality.'<sup>34</sup> He 'places creative ability back into the conscious - and will - of people.'<sup>35</sup> The

theory of moments re-affirms agency emphasising 'spontaneity, creativity, dialogue...the poetic moment.'<sup>36</sup> Shields writes that 'Lefebvre is a humanist who believes that such sentiments are cultural universals. In contrast to current positions that unveil the socially constructed nature of nearly everything, Lefebvre had complete, even naïve faith in the primacy of authentic experience.'<sup>37</sup> As a romantic revolutionary, he goes so far as to compare agency in activity with the agency at the heart of being in love.

Lefebvre introduces the centrality of human agency as – 'a will to create and transform...a source of human self-creative effort.'<sup>38</sup> He 'points to the cracks in the concrete made by that which cannot be repressed... sexual desire, love, delights of play, allure of festival, bursts of enjoyment...'<sup>39</sup> Play, (moments of play), and pleasure are also important. He mentions tactility, non-visual regimes, and the tragic. Lebas and Kofman state about Lefebvre in *Writing Cities* that 'possibly the most striking and neglected aspect to be commented upon in this translation is the debt to Nietzsche, whom Lefebvre sought to conjoin with Marx. The emphasis on the body, sexuality, violence, and the tragic....' <sup>40</sup> Lefebvre says, 'There is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body's deployment in space and its occupation of space. Before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing itself* by generating other bodies, each living

body is space and has space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space.’<sup>41</sup> Shields acknowledges that ‘Lefebvre would place the experience of the body at the centre of his attempts to reground theory – ‘The body, at the very heart of space and of the discourse of power is irreducible and subversive. It is the body which is the point of return.’’<sup>42</sup> Lebas and Kofman also point out that for Lefebvre the body ‘is the most basic form of the production of time.’<sup>43</sup> However Shields acknowledges that ‘...he nonetheless avoids discussions of the undefined, the formless or what the Romantics called ‘the monstrous,’ and ‘...the formless and the monstrous appear only implicitly in Lefebvre’s work as forms of lack and alienation.’<sup>44</sup> Significantly ‘He never lets himself get carried away – even when one expects it. Thus he appears to reduce ‘moments’ back to logic, and love to instrumental action.’<sup>45</sup>

Shields acknowledges that ‘The Theory of Moments dates back to one of Lefebvre’s earliest published papers, ‘La Pensée et L’esprit’ (1926), in which he attempted to specify the link between the body and consciousness in terms of presence rather than possession, abstraction or pure concept.’<sup>46</sup> He says that moments have ‘a concrete existence and unite the subjectivity and objectivity of traditional philosophy.’<sup>47</sup> They are the result and summary of the development of the human being, and spirit is brought nearer through the body, nearer through the spoken word and poetry rather than classical



spirituality, writing or knowledge.<sup>48</sup> 'Lefebvre explicitly denies that he is using the term 'moment' in any Hegelian sense, such as 'moment of inertia' or a moment in the progress of civilisation. Nor does Lefebvre mean a psychological or existential experience although he admits that some sort of subjective experience is involved.'<sup>49</sup>

Shields indicates that the implications for an otherness of moments, and of creative and lived *space* was not fully exploited or grasped by Lefebvre.<sup>50</sup> Yet going further it might be asked what the implications are of considering the otherness of creative facets of moments and lived *time*. One place to start is with the experiential or subjective qualities of moments. While moments are those instances with their own personal criteria they 'outflank the pretensions of wordy thesis, rules and laws, and challenge the limits of everyday living.'<sup>51</sup> They are 'those times when one recognises or has a sudden insight into a situation or an experience' and can be characterised as 'a flash of the wider significance of some 'thing' or event – its relation to the whole. And by extension, our relation to totality.'<sup>52</sup> Harvey describes them as 'revelatory of the totality of possibilities contained in daily existence.'<sup>53</sup> Or Highmore as 'those instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday.'<sup>54</sup> They are also "moments of vivid sensations of disgust, of shock, of delight, and so on, which although fleeting, provide a promise of the possibility of a different daily life".<sup>55</sup> Elden

and Shields point out a very significant and individual moment in Lefebvre's life: a vision of a crucified sun.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, Elden writes that the theory of moments was the germ for the later development of the rhythmanalysis project, Lefebvre's final work.<sup>57</sup>

Lefebvre introduces a category of creativity: 'Lefebvre called this poesis, the experience and creation of human nature; the realisation of the self, including the creation of the city, the idea of absolute love, psychoanalysis, the decision to change ones life – in short the creation of situations...'<sup>58</sup> From the quote, poesis appears to include a disparate experience of the self - 'The realisation of the self, including...' Shields mentions a sense of fragmentation is reflected in the broader experience of the self and of the moment: 'This Freudian stress on the internal consistency of the person, who is thought of as a monad, is at odds with the more fluid model of subjectivity that he (Lefebvre) sought to import from the Romantics, from Dada and the Situationists.'<sup>59</sup>

The tensions in Lefebvre's strain of thinking emerge from his asking 'Why must Marxism evacuate the symbolic, the dream and the imaginary and systematically eliminate the 'poetic being', the oeuvre?'<sup>60</sup> He writes it is creativity that is both 'an antidote to alienation'<sup>61</sup> and a model from which to develop 'the subjectivity necessary for coping with a miserable reality, and to

resist and to alter the reality principle.’<sup>62</sup> And ‘These works or ‘oeuvres’ are an antidote to alienation because they too are a representation that make an abstract possibility, or even an impossible utopia, ‘present’ for the audience and creator.’<sup>63</sup> Oeuvres then are a means for creating or transforming the possible. ‘Lefebvre privileges the creation of works (likened to artworks) instead of products or commodities.’<sup>64</sup> Although somewhat simplistically ‘Craft work, interior decoration, community pageants and so on could all be analysed using Lefebvre’s concept of *oeuvre*.’<sup>65</sup> According to Lefebvre ‘In contrast to the philosopher, the creator of works [oeuvres] doesn’t distance himself from or bracket [époché] everydaylife in a mania for the paradoxical...concepts, ideas, ideologies. In disengaging from the everyday and from social practice, he enters into another practice, his own, poetic action. There he is in relation with other works –earlier or made at the same time – with other creators of artistic works’<sup>66</sup> Yet his key concepts of the oeuvres were the making of the landscape and of the city.

Lefebvre’s ideas consider a non-deterministic realm of production outside of a traditional aesthetic. In some of his writings, and his contacts, he is critical of a traditional aesthetic, yet equally he articulates some of his thinking in reference to art, to ideas about art movements, and to an aesthetic realm. ‘Where and how is the esoteric (inner) revelation accomplished in the history of man’s powers?’ he asks. ‘One (answer) gives priority to *ethics*, the other to

*aesthetics.*' And 'for the second interpretation it is art which constitutes human power...'<sup>67</sup> Effectively he attempts to develop ideas about creativity and poiesis within the realm of Marxist praxis, or change. Yet there are fundamentally important tensions and specific priorities in the meeting of his ideas about poiesis (or creativity) with praxis. *Praxis* in its traditional guise is the Marxist conception of the practice of change. However Elden says 'Lefebvre argues that it may be too utilitarian, and draws upon the ideas of poiesis as a 'counter-weight'.<sup>68</sup> 'Poiesis is in some sense a balance between speculation and praxis...' and it is a notion of creation, or creative production, but neither is it just production in a traditional aesthetic sense.<sup>69</sup> Not all creation is "poiesis" therefore. Gardiner argues about Lefebvre's work that 'human praxis is not restricted to the utilitarian transformation of external nature through repetitive instrumental action (production). It also involves love, sensuality, the body, affect – a plethora of creative, emotive, and imaginative practices collectively referred to as poiesis in Lefebvre's 1965 book *Métaphilosophie*. These passions, vital activities, and needs are bound up with the human self-formative process as this occurs in and through "appropriation" of nature, which must be brought to completion of fulfilment.'<sup>70</sup> As Shields mentions Lefebvre shared a romantic fascination for bringing the rational and the subjective together.

The subtitle to Lefebvre's book *Introduction to Modernity* published in 1962 is called '12 preludes September 1959 – May 1961.' He asks 'Why the subtitle Preludes? ...It means the themes broached - elements of a general theory- will be tackled in a general way. And consciously so: they will not form a finished totality, a comprehensive picture or system.'<sup>71</sup> He says 'What is more: the untimeliness of a comprehensive picture, the impossibility of a definitive system and a complete totality for our times - these themselves will be among the themes.'<sup>72</sup> Though he also acknowledges 'Yet the themes will not be treated in isolation from one another. They will interweave and correspond, echoing and rebounding from one to another.'<sup>73</sup> For example he questions language's role as the 'positive incarnation of absolute reason.'<sup>74</sup> And besides his political and revolutionary leanings, he suggests an important realm of praxis and creativity, mediated by discourse that is always incomplete. He says 'We must go beyond language, and even beyond the active word, to find, to discover – to create – what is yet to be said.'<sup>75</sup> He says 'That this book is intended to have musical qualities should be obvious. It is constructed like a piece of music. Its wish is to be understood in the mind's ear, to be a cry, a song, a sigh, and not simply to be read as a theoretical and discursive statement.'<sup>76</sup> To some extent these words resonate with Constant's description of a Cobra aesthetic and sensibility.

*Production*, for Lefebvre, and paraphrasing Elden, is not just economic production, but creations, material production, and the making of things. Production in its widest sense includes works of art, the production of cities, knowledge, and culture. The production of oeuvres, or works. The mental interaction with the world, and not the separation of material objects and mental production of ideas, produces the world we encounter.<sup>77</sup> The production of spaces for example owes as much to conceptual realms as to material activities.<sup>78</sup> Yet it does not just appear, it is not only lived. Lefebvre's 'lived' harbours a wariness of the exclusively theoretical - particularly philosophy - in favour of the experienced. And he challenges philosophy's projection of a separate realm of thought, though not of thinking, for whom both the philosopher '...and man must be thought and then realised.'<sup>79</sup> So poiesis is a fundamentally important creative *and* speculative realm.

Production for Lefebvre is not only economic, yet nor is it only clay. Or space matter, as he calls it, in the *Production of Space*. He describes 'the substance of human everyday life as 'human raw material.' He separates materials from *materiels*. Materials can be stone, and bone: words and images or musical scales. 'Materials are indispensable and durable.'<sup>80</sup> While *materiel* is tools, language, instructions, collection procedures. 'Instances of material in music would be the piano, the saxophone or the lute. In the



construction industry, new techniques and equipment fall under this rubric.’ While *Materiel* embodies behaviour patterns, movement – gesture and dance; rather than the material of heredity. *Materiel* is the activity to *produce* or create the object. Lefebvre thinks about the activity to produce *materiel*, for example, in lived experience. He describes and is critical of the propensity of methods to either be an illusion of transparency that look far into the distance, or to be an illusion of materiality that looks close-up.

Words that are used to describe *materiel* are ‘strategies,’ ‘techniques,’ ‘procedures.’ They can be about making, thinking, or creating. Lefebvre discusses elements of decoding, (some of Barthes work is problematised), language and the symbolic. Yet it is *materiel* or meaning in conjunction with a practice - the signifying *and* the spatial for example. ‘Space thus rejoins material production: the production of goods, things, objects of exchange...’<sup>81</sup> Lefebvre’s representational space is both lived-and-imagined. New needs invent new *materiel*, different instruments, equipment. In architecture *materiel* is ‘arches, vaults, pillars, and columns’ cloisters, or castles. Japanese gardens.<sup>82</sup> They are the articulation of meaning and ‘accumulated knowledge,’ and are ‘inhabited by a specific local temporality.’<sup>83</sup> In some ways his thinking about *materiel* and about lived dimensions brings its contexts closer to fieldwork. In this sense ‘Architecture produces living bodies, each with its own distinctive traits.’<sup>84</sup> He says what is

truly essential about *materiel* gets through the grid of a formal, functional or structural method.<sup>85</sup> 'The animating principle of such a body, its presence, is neither visible nor legible as such, nor is it the object of any discourse, for it reproduces itself within those who use the space in question, within their lived experience. Of that experience the tourist, the passive spectator, can grasp but a pale shadow.'<sup>86</sup>

Lefebvre was sympathetic at different times in his career, to a range of influences. The emphases in his work developed and changed with time. For example there was a transcendent and mystical strain of Catholicism; a nihilistic and Dadaist strain; an imaginary and revolutionary strain in the Surreal; and Nietzsche's strain of the tragic.<sup>87</sup> In many ways some of Lefebvre ideas, about creativity and moments for example, can be grasped more qualitatively in contrast with his links to art movements. 'In the 1920s Lefebvre was associated with the Surrealists and influenced by Tristan Tzara's Dadaism.'<sup>88</sup> He met Tzara, through the older Surrealists led by Max Jacob. From his first encounter, Lefebvre was taken with the Dadaist poets' refusal to make sense and satisfy the expectations of their audience.'<sup>89</sup> These strains echoed his suspicion of all final structures of meaning and sympathy for anti-philosophical frameworks. 'Ideas and concepts could also be destabilised: they too were ambiguous, fluid.'<sup>90</sup> An interest in the experimental, anti-philosophical, and anti-formal strain of Dadaism is also

there in his early, and sometimes critical, writing about Dada, 'who challenged the invulnerability and reliability of meaning.'<sup>91</sup> So for example, 'Tristan Tzara, one of the founders of Dadaism, made a lasting link with Lefebvre after the publication of Lefebvre's admiring expansion of Tzara's 'Sept manifestes dada' in the fourth issue of *Philosophies* (1924).'<sup>92</sup>

Lefebvre was interested in a Dadaist spirit, yet was also critical of it. He also regretted all his life not being at Zurich for the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire.<sup>93</sup> Shields mentions that 'By showing how everyday objects could be exhibited as 'art', the Dadaists challenged the dividing line between high and low culture, that is, between art and everyday life.'<sup>94</sup> Yet more than this 'Lefebvre's inheritance was Dada's all-out attack on traditions and sources of legitimacy and authority.'<sup>95</sup> And 'Inspired by Tzara, Lefebvre argued that it was necessary to go beyond Dada, to finish 'smashing the pieces' that Dada had left. To make a lasting change not in an artist's cabaret but in the broader sphere of everyday life.'<sup>96</sup> Shields highlights the fact that 'Dada challenged the invulnerability and reliability of meaning' and that 'Dada fitted with Lefebvre's interest in Romanticism.'<sup>97</sup>

Lefebvre had also met Breton and 'had started to associate with Breton's fledgling group of Surrealists...'<sup>98</sup> It was through the Surrealists that he was introduced to the works of Hegel, and therefore to dialectics.<sup>99</sup> It is especially

to Surrealist Literature, though not exclusively, that he turns. During Lefebvre's early lifetime when he was first formulating a theory of moments, the nature of momentary perceptions was already being explored in the 1920s by the Dadaists and later by the Surrealists. For the Dadaists nonsense, play, and festivity questioned the reliability and form of meaning. The likes of Tristan Tzara, Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp sought to overturn the limits of its representations. Dada's notion of the modern sublime had become an experience that was conceptually difficult to grasp: 'Dada was the prototype of the modern sublime, that is, a mixture of awe and terror as our imagination and concepts fail to grasp an experience.'<sup>100</sup> It was about going beyond the limits of meaning. Lefebvre called the perception of the moment, a moment of presence. Significantly perhaps, of the two groups, he had greater sympathy for the Dadaists and their all out attack on structures of meaning. Shields maintains that Lefebvre's Dadaist legacy prevents him from being understood as simply a Marxist, or a sociologist.

For the Surrealists, through the development of a personal consciousness, moments were partly a transcendent or surreal experience, leading the individual out of everyday life. Yet within some elements of surrealism, its perceptions were also set in a place, and normally in its everyday banalities. Thereby the moment was more than its transcendence, as it was not just

being experienced anywhere or anyhow. Besides psychic automatism and the exploration of dreams, the literary works of Aragon's *Paris Peasant* and Breton's *Najda* were both set in Paris. Everyday objects and events, were set within the struggles of a Paris arcade, or within the traces of the past - they were made strange to reveal the marvellous, albeit a *historically* struggling one, within the everyday. A montage of typefaces, city notices, tales, and a mini-play mimicked a drift or derive in the city as a form in itself, in some ways similar to Benjamin's rag-picker and the tradition of the flâneur. And these forms fore-grounded the historical and the marvellous, or fascinating, in a way that heralded the development of *dérive* within Surrealism. And yet again, it was not exclusively about a traditional aesthetic. It was about relating to, and the relationships among, space, habits, and things. A city, a street, or objects dreaming. It was about the individual in relation to the marvellous and the otherness of the everyday. Aesthetic experience thereby was informing, and being informed by, space, or activity. From this viewpoint, it is in Surrealism 'that we find two methodological tools for attending to the everyday; the first is the process of montage, seen here as the most crucial representational form for the everyday; the second is a reworking of social anthropology that mobilises it for attending to the domestic everyday.'<sup>101</sup> Shields also points out some similarities in Lefebvre with the optical unconscious in Walter Benjamin, who had read, annotated

and referenced Lefebvre.<sup>102</sup> However 'The idea of a transcendent moment remained Lefebvre's fascination all his life.'<sup>103</sup>

Though they were to go separate ways, Lefebvre was sympathetic, in simple terms, with the Surrealist's attempts to bring together art and lifestyle. The Surrealists were to find common cause, albeit temporarily, with the Philosophie group of whom Lefebvre was a member, in a signed declaration opposing the war against Morocco in 1925. However Lefebvre was critical of the Surrealists attempts to transcend alienation through an individualistic and surrealist experience. His focus was also the political and historical contexts of alienation.

In his *Introduction to Modernity* Lefebvre refers to the importance of the Russian Revolution to art, thought, and music in France.<sup>104</sup> The early Twentieth Century, he writes, heralded the birth of Modernity, and of doubt and questioning. Writing in the 1960s he says about the Dadaists and Surrealists that their 'negative aspects now seem outdated, but which criticised and challenged things in a profoundly effective way.'<sup>105</sup> An important strand in modernity he identifies in Literature, and points to a current that cultivated style in living rather than the work of art per se. And he says 'I am sure you will recognise this as a description of Surrealism.'<sup>106</sup> These ideas about lifestyle are effectively what Lefebvre comes to grasp at in



some his ideas about an aesthetic. Yet he argues that the Surrealists missed the point when they developed an 'illusory appearance of a style. This aestheticism has resulted in a plethora of confusions and counterconfusions.'<sup>107</sup> That it carried the seeds of its own self-destruction. And that like Dadaism it denied art, literature and the validity of language.<sup>108</sup> The second current, he says, subordinated life to art, 'and kept intact the idea of art, poetic creation and the will to create.'<sup>109</sup> For example Max Jacob. In painting he mentions Kandinsky and Chagall, Picasso and Braque, in architecture he mentions Gropius and Bauhaus, in music Schoenberg, and Brecht in Theatre.<sup>110</sup> He describes 1925-30 as a great period of art, and effectively claims that a period of stagnation set in, as the world of technology took over. Though coming back to a theme of creativity, he said of the Surrealists in 1990: 'In this group, Eluard is one of the personalities who had most impressed me...For sure he was the image of Rimbaud. But Rimbaud had renounced writing poetry while Eluard and Tzara found a source of inspiration there.'<sup>111</sup>

In *Introduction to Modernity* 'Lefebvre looks towards an avant-garde aesthetic to think about creative, philosophical and political problems. These ideas about a revolutionary romanticism were developed after Lefebvre left the French Communist party in 1957. He asks 'Will we move towards a new romanticism, and beyond that towards 'something else' other than art?''<sup>112</sup> He

asks 'What art, what form of thinking could assume the function of an avant garde or a 'homing device''?'<sup>113</sup> He mentions and rejects philosophy. Music? He suggests Atonal, Concrete, and Electronic Music, yet dismisses music as having not found its direction (though as Ross points out he excludes popular music of the 1960s). Painting? Poetry? He says the question marks remain. 'Cinema, Maybe?...'<sup>114</sup> Beyond its prejudices why not architecture and planning also, he asks?

He attributes to music (the later half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century) a transformative and avant-garde role as a pilot art. Yet Lefebvre's plea is for art to become '*simultaneously a way of living, a way of saying, a way of making*, and both life and the work of art were revealed through style...' <sup>115</sup> He says 'the problem of the work of art and the problem of lifestyle, of the will to create and of the 'situation' of the work as object and product, were both posed simultaneously. They were two inseparable yet distinct aspects of the same problem.'<sup>116</sup> Lefebvre, as a critic, neither condemns nor endorses social realism yet looks beyond art and romanticism.<sup>117</sup> Paradoxically however, in Lefebvre's new romanticism as a movement, a challenge, and a possibility, rather than an attitude, whose conditions he describes as 'the interconnection of conflicts and contradictions...' there is also a requirement for a break with the old romanticism and its consequences first.<sup>118</sup>

In contrast to a world view or *weltanschauung* Lefebvre states that he is talking about ‘*an aesthetic world*.’<sup>119</sup> That, he says, includes circumstantial elements taken from history and social practice. And that differs from philosophical activity.<sup>120</sup> He adds, ‘*Aesthetic* activity does not work upon concepts. It functions by *making* (the work of art), *saying* and *living*. It does not confine itself to discourse. It works upon a material (which can be verbal, but if so, the words become raw materials to be worked upon, like colours or sounds).’<sup>121</sup> The different categories to philosophy also include ‘not only the *working* of *materials*, but also *imagination* (and the presence of symbols) and a particular historicity.’<sup>122</sup> He critiques the loss of prime symbols, such as the feminine. And concomitantly he is critical of the development of the child as the prime symbol, the mediator, between dream and reality, nature and culture. It is the blurring of the myths and symbols of the child, he says, that leads to the development of a cosmological tradition with thinkers such as Schopenhauer, or a psychologist Hartmann, rather than its anthropological antecedents.<sup>123</sup> He argues art and art history is riven with discontinuities, as social and partial contexts are also fragments of a social practice. ‘*Aesthetic* activity tends to use the element or ‘formants’ at its disposal to create – or rather, produce – a ‘world’, the world of art...’ and ‘It produces an alternative reality within the real world by making the imaginary real.’<sup>124</sup> This is not only the result of a struggle between classicism and romanticism.

Both, according to Lefebvre, devour their own vital substances as classicism is composed of myths and accomplished possibilities (possible possibilities), while romanticism is made up of symbols and impossibilities (impossible possibilities)<sup>125</sup> Although they are important contradictory tendencies. However, he says, this dialectic would be an oversimplified representation of art and art history as other elements are involved. 'The work of art does not embody a pre-existing Weltanschauung.'<sup>126</sup>

Lefebvre simplifies the debate for the reader in the latter part of 'Towards a New Romanticism' in terms of a mock conversation between two imaginary characters, called Mr A and B, with Mr A doubting and asking questions. Lefebvre's quarrel seems to be with the contradictions in Romanticism. Of it wanting to create something vital, as aspiring towards pure creativity, yet turning to abstraction and the imagination. He develops a paradoxical set of arguments - yes and no is one of his favourite answers - where he asserts the importance of valid artworks, Picasso, Lowry for example, yet also says - Why not externalise art, he asks, make it part of a sense of participation, beautify the social? Arts highest form of beauty is its social aesthetic, he asserts, not its moral, spectacular, or autobiographical imperatives.<sup>127</sup> A style in life is more important than artistic constructs.<sup>128</sup> The art of living informs the senses rather than the work of art.<sup>129</sup>

Lefebvre develops implications of thinking in 'Introduction to Modernity' in artistic, aesthetic and cultural terms as well as avant garde terms. He highlights problems and tensions in art, philosophy and in culture, and rounds on questions of social value, style in life, and social living over the life of the individual. Yet in his impassioned and speculative development, in simple terms, an anti-art undercurrent also emerges. Or limits and excludes a dimension of art, or of individuals, to consider solutions and sets of relations in their terms. He says 'art and artists – and this includes writers - bring something splendid to social life and praxis.'<sup>130</sup> Yet says 'It (art) has no 'elements' - no raw material - other than this life of society.'<sup>131</sup> Among others he mentions the problems of the work of art itself, the conditions for producing it, and the problems of lifestyle.<sup>132</sup> The problem seems to be, he says, art as an aesthetic. Effectively he says 'In a word aestheticism contains a strange alienation.'<sup>133</sup> Art is abstracted from reality - though Lefebvre is not saying he wants to be rid of the world of expression **either**.<sup>134</sup> However underlying his criticism is also the suggestion of an art historical teleology of sorts; art moving towards its own future crisis, and ultimately, its supercession, within reality. 'If life is to become the art of living, art must die and be reborn in life.'<sup>135</sup> Or, 'I would like to consider a supercession of romanticism and classicism which would also be a supercession of art, but would have the restitution of the romantic spirit as its fulcrum...'<sup>136</sup>

### **The Everyday: Lived experience, Methodology, and the Situationists**

The everyday was Lefebvre's life-long passion. It was especially relevant after the Second World War, and again towards the end of his career. Three works were produced as a critique of everyday life by Lefebvre over four decades - in 1947, 1961, and 1981 - as 'updates on an inconclusive struggle.'<sup>137</sup> Significantly, Lefebvre returned to 'the interweaving and structuring of temporalities in everyday life, especially in the theory of moments' in the 1980s and 90s.<sup>138</sup> His last work, *Rhythmanalysis*, published in 1992, was considered the 4th part of a series about the everyday.<sup>139</sup> *The Production of Space*, the work he is most famous for in the English speaking world, was published in 1974, so Lefebvre had written about the everyday many years before and after its publication.<sup>140</sup> In terms of romanticism and the everyday, Highmore says 'It is the constellation of the avant-garde movements of Dada and surrealism (he remained life-long friends with Tzara) linked to the philosophical work of Hegel and its materialist reshaping in the early works of Marx that gives Lefebvre's work its thematic insistence on the everyday as a site for the investigation of alienation.'<sup>141</sup>

The everyday was the arena where his key concepts of alienation (from ourselves and from one another) and a mystified consciousness could be explored critically – that is, within the ordinary terms of the present. He provides a reading of how economics has come to dominate the cultural and



the social world. And that alienation has impoverished everyday life and goes beyond the economic. 'The everyday that grips Henri Lefebvre's voluminous writings on the subject is one orchestrated by the logic of the commodity where life is lived according to the rhythm of capital.'<sup>142</sup> The everyday was an arena for thinking through alienation and its contestation. It was a place where its effects could be examined - and ultimately, radicalised. A programme for transforming alienation required changes within everyday life itself. Elden says, 'The critique of everyday life that he undertakes has a contribution to make to *the art of living* and he believes that the art of living implies the end of alienation.'<sup>143</sup> Shields emphasises that his interest in alienation, or alienations, along with a fascination for a fully lived life, transcended his political commitments.<sup>144</sup> Lefebvre asks how to proceed in order to effect a rehabilitation of a state of alienation (or a mystified consciousness) - 'By starting with the portrait of the most prosaic of men in his daily life.'<sup>145</sup> Shields says, 'over almost 40 years in his series *Critique of Everyday Life*, everyday life merged as the ground of resistance and renewal, which was essential to the 'moments' and flashes of unalienated presence that punctured it.'<sup>146</sup> Elden that 'Indeed, the notion of everyday life is immanent to almost all of his work.'<sup>147</sup>

Lefebvre's writings about the everyday are broad ranging. Insightful and stimulating, and, arguably, dense and burdened - that is, by a critical marxist

frame. Descriptions of daily life in Literature are followed by analyses of bureaucracy. He writes about consumer society, working class conscience, technocracy, the putative end of modernity, advances in information technology.<sup>148</sup> However the contexts of the everyday can be remarkably ordinary. He also writes about literature, film, leisure. Liz Taylor, fashion, **Elle** magazine, and beauty products. He writes about the French countryside, theatre, communal traditions - simple rituals, shopping, and housing. These include local contexts, the destruction of the local market place such as 'the renovation of Les Hâles in central Paris about which he felt deeply and emotionally.'<sup>149</sup>

Highmore states that it is in Lefebvre's thesis about peasant communities in the Campan valley where Lefebvre begins to think out his project for the everyday.<sup>150</sup> For Lefebvre, the rural is as important a theme as the urban. He studies how people live, and through the familiar. Through everyday places, and their uses. Yet despite the knowingness of a critical orientation, the everyday is held as a site of complexity and polyvalence. Highmore states, in the context of everyday theories, and Lefebvre's' is one of them, 'the theories and practices that are investigated here offer a fundamental challenge to the idea of everyday life as self-evident.'<sup>151</sup> It may bring out the extraordinary in the ordinary, and the not easily knowable. About the everyday in general, Highmore says: 'Self-reflexive and struggling with the

unmanageability of the everyday, this is a story of various attempts to find approximations of everyday life, to fashion out forms more adequate to the task of attending to the everyday than those that might see it as all too easily knowable.’<sup>152</sup> For example, Highmore delineates three clusters of questions around aesthetics, archives/histories, and practices/critiques that also bear relevance for Lefebvre’s connections of thinking.

Lefebvre sets up the idea of festival within the everyday. He bemoans the fact that there has been a decline of style and festival in society. This means for Lefebvre, Elden says, not going back to old ideas of festival or style, ‘but the concepts of style and festival can be used.’<sup>153</sup> Therefore everyday life was also a study of alienation under the conditions of modernity. One of Lefebvre’s earlier works about Rabelais, (in 1955), included the relevance of festivities and the carnival in peasant life.<sup>154</sup> ‘La fête is a continual reference point for Lefebvre as he outlines his critique of everyday life. Festival holds an equivocal position in the everyday...’<sup>155</sup> Moments thereby include festive situations. He draws on his research on peasant society in the Pyrenees, and on a rural outlook in a chapter in *Critique of the Everyday* called ‘Notes Written One Sunday in the French Countryside.’ Yet Lefebvre ‘focuses more and more insistently on the urban as the site for apprehending the everyday.’<sup>156</sup> Yet Lefebvre’s use of carnival seems to stresses the importance of struggle and the contestation of authenticity. Thematically this is also

linked by Highmore to a current that includes Bataille and Bakhtin.<sup>157</sup> The fête or festival is a central and recurring theme. In opposition to a visually dominant aesthetic, the resurrection of style, ritual, and the relationship of the body to its rhythms and surrounding spaces is another similar theme. These ideas were also developed together with the Situationist's in their collaboration with Lefebvre on a Theory of Situations.

Marcus, invoking Lefebvre says: "Instead of examining institutions and classes, structures of economic production and social control one had to think of 'moments', moments of love, hate, poetry, frustration, action...' **and** so on 'those tiny epiphanies Lefebvre said, in which the absolute possibilities and temporal limits of anyone's existence were revealed. The richness or poverty of any social formation could be judged only on the terms of these evanescences'<sup>158</sup> For Lefebvre, moments were social *and* individual experiences, conditioned by their contexts and relationships: they are 'social relationships and forms of individualised consciousness.'<sup>159</sup> In practical terms, and in the context of the time of his writing, Lefebvre would include in moment's dramatic changes and disruptions to everyday routine, such as the revolutionary events of the Paris Commune in 1871. Lived time included "moments of effervescence" when "existence is public through and through" or moments of revolutionary potential and political change. In this way the experience of change in lived time is relatively fast. In a chapter called 'The

Inventory' he discusses moments of play, moments of rest, of poetry. Moments of justice.<sup>160</sup> Yet he does so in terms of agency by stressing social and individual contents – 'indivisibly individual and social being' or 'socio-individual man.'<sup>161</sup> He describes the theory of moments not as theory of knowledge (*connaissance*) or an ontology (or a critique of ontology), but as a study at the sociological level, to which the individual is not separate.<sup>162</sup> 'These moments thus first appear as sociological realities.'<sup>163</sup>

Discourses *about* the everyday were different from critiques *in* the everyday. Lefebvre writes 'Thus it is that the functions of a critique of everyday life can be determined by a reference to an art which immerses itself in everyday life.'<sup>164</sup> And 'In contrast to the philosopher, the creator of works (*oeuvres*) doesn't distance himself from or bracket everyday life...'<sup>165</sup> As Highmore acknowledges '...the everyday also signalled a frustration with philosophy and a desire to connect with the lived actuality of the present...'<sup>166</sup> Essentially, the everyday is not determined philosophically, there are creative and critical practices within it. Highmore says, 'It is in this critical dialogue with cultural theory, coupled with a continual attention to lived experience (the uses of fashion, not just its abstract meaning) that Lefebvre articulates his dialectics of everyday life.'<sup>167</sup>

Highmore emphasises that 'Lefebvre...treats everyday life as the *relationships* between different registers of social life...' and '... everyday life was quite simply *lived experience*...' Formulating these lived experiences allows Lefebvre 'to privilege creativity for the transformation of daily life ('let everyday life become a work of art) [Lefebvre 1984: 204]) and to argue for the decline of centrally organised society.'<sup>168</sup> Shield's understanding is that Lefebvre's everyday was 'a lower sphere of meaning where creative energy is stored in readiness for new creations,' and described as a 'place that can be reduced neither to philosophical subjective definitions nor to objective representations of classified objects...because it is more and other than these.' Shields says in addition to Heidegger's influence, 'it is from the Surrealists that Lefebvre drew his central concept of *Le quotidien*, the everyday.'<sup>169</sup> Elden and Shields both mention the influence of Joyce and the novel *Ulysses* as Lefebvre suggests it was Joyce that established the everyday in Literature.<sup>170</sup>

'Like the everyday the street changes constantly and always repeats itself.'<sup>171</sup> Lefebvre says the street is an almost complete condensation of social life. 'The street publishes what happens elsewhere, in secret.'<sup>172</sup> Lefebvre was sympathetic to the idea of reading landscapes as one of its layers, (though he lost sympathy as structuralist interpretations held sway.) 'Each of us is constantly – every day – faced with a social text. We move through it, we

read it.<sup>173</sup> In his early writing in *Key Writings* there is a chapter on the Social Text: 'The landscape also presents us with a social text, usually readable and sometimes wonderfully composed...' In terms of the city: 'Symbolism is condensed in the monuments; churches, cathedrals, palaces, great public and private buildings are full of symbols mingled with their decoration and aesthetic style. Monuments are works (oeuvres) that give a city its face and its rhythm.'<sup>174</sup> He says neighbourhoods and monuments, houses and objects present an informative text, rich in signs and meanings. 'The world of objects as they present themselves in the street form one of the subtlest but least well-defined systems of signs.'<sup>175</sup> Monuments were not only about the body and language but also about meaning and power. At its broadest and about the urban problematic he says 'in sum, the *virtual object* is nothing other than the planetary society and the "world town."<sup>176</sup> He also says because rural life preceded modernity, there is no reason to assume it is simpler. However, his prosaic writing about the rural and urban, 'Notes Written One Sunday in the French Countryside' for example, suggests he mourns the loss of its traditions, symbolisms, and ways of French village and urban life that were a facet of his post Second World War life in France.

Inevitably for Lefebvre, the everyday was imbricated with its practices, and its spaces. For example 'But everyday life also figures in representational spaces – or perhaps it would be more accurate to say it forms such spaces.'<sup>177</sup>



Lefebvre's acknowledges, the 'departure point for this history of space' is described as 'inscription by human action', and the 'spatio-temporal rhythms of nature as transformed by a social practice.'<sup>178</sup> Highmore says 'Lefebvre's explicit emphasis on everyday life incorporates everything from a critique of urban planning to a poetics of movement.'<sup>179</sup> The everyday therefore helps to frame themes as diverse as gestures; the ritualised use of space; our relationships with the dead; with nature; and with architectural forms. And Lefebvre emphasises their qualitative nature - 'Thus the *texture* of space affords opportunities...to a spatial practice that it does indeed determine, namely its collective and individual use: a sequence of acts which embody a signifying practice even if they cannot be reduced to such a practice. Life and death are not merely conceptualised, simulated or given expression by these acts; rather, it is in and through them that life and death actually have their being.'<sup>180</sup>

The everyday for Lefebvre was the place where philosophy stopped. It became a part of practical and competing realms in space, society and politics. Shields says, 'The sphere of everyday life is a dynamic arena of practice.'<sup>181</sup> Elden, referring to Trebitsch, that the Critique of Everyday Life is a sociological discourse on method.<sup>182</sup> It emphasises the changing present. 'But because everyday life is crucially a dynamic concept, it is continually responding to an observable reality that will necessarily rework its theoretical

coordinates...'<sup>183</sup> Highmore explains that 'The dialectic between the practical and the theoretical, between the concrete and the abstract requires a mutual and continual testing. There is no empirical reality that can be simply encountered so that it will reveal the forces that produce it.'<sup>184</sup> He mentions that Lefebvre develops a critical philosophy to shatter the 'natural' appearance of objects and relations. This allows him to develop an eclectic range of philosophical references not in an attempt to synthesise them, but 'in a critical movement to dislodge the lure of the total system.'<sup>185</sup> Yet in addition to living in the everyday, a critical distance between the author and the object of investigation is needed. 'The analysis must use critical knowledge and action together, theory and praxis: 'only the philosopher, and the sociologist informed by the dialectic, and maybe the novelist, manage to join together the *lived* and the *real*, *formal* structure and *content*.'<sup>186</sup> Lefebvre's stance marks an empirical, or an anti-philosophical, wariness about the separation of ideas from their methods and practices. 'Philosophers and philosophy can no longer be isolated, disguised, hidden. And this is precisely because everyday life is the supreme court where wisdom, knowledge and power are brought to judgement.'<sup>187</sup> In this regard, Lefebvre arguably developed a creative sociology of the everyday.

Lefebvre is suspicious of totalizing grand narratives that abstract the experiential and thought. Highmore indicates he is critical not only of

abstract theoretical differences but also their 'differences of consequence in the life world.'<sup>188</sup> Though Lefebvre's ideas, in consequence, are also susceptible to his own set of privileges and erasures of difference.<sup>189</sup> Philosophically he is sympathetic to the ideas of Heidegger.<sup>190</sup> Highmore mentions Lefebvre continually refers to Heidegger about everyday life and the triviality of the daily 'where people have become object-like, versus an authentic life of the spirit, is something that Lefebvre struggles to refuse.'<sup>191</sup> However Lefebvre also moves away from a Heideggerian metaphysical self, he is critical of a generic and authentic culture, and celebrates the significance of struggle and *La fête* in culture. Furthermore, Elden says, Lefebvre mentions a relationship with a libidinal object: '...Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* is criticized for its lack of sex, and Lefebvre suggests that the Freudian theory of the Libido 'is often richer and closer to the concrete.'<sup>192</sup> Yet Lefebvre also moves away from the orthodox Surrealists' poetics about the self's primary location within the Surreal and automative unconscious. Highmore points out that Martin Jays book 'puts the work of Lefebvre together with Surrealism and the emergence of a French Hegelian Marxism.'<sup>193</sup> He writes that Hegel's ideas were influential in Paris through the lectures of Kojève, where the likes of Bataille, Lacan, Breton, Merleau-Ponty, and Queneau attended.<sup>194</sup> Elden writes 'This notion of everyday life has been usefully situated between the two principal movements of post-war French theory – existential phenomenology and structuralism.'<sup>195</sup> Lefebvre

acknowledges yet also makes strong criticisms of Satre, Foucault and Barthes for the fact that they do not deal satisfactorily with everyday life.<sup>196</sup> Though 'Barthes is the one structuralist Lefebvre seemed to have any time for.'<sup>197</sup> He praised his work but judges that 'Barthes dismisses sociology on behalf of semiology.'<sup>198</sup> About phenomenology Lefebvre states it looks at too small a scale, ignoring contextual issues, while structuralism reifies structures instead of their inter-relation with issues of agency, the level of life and individuality.<sup>199</sup> The total picture needs to be taken into account, he says.

Problematically in many ways, the theory of moments introduces the 'total person' [sic] though as a 'figure on a distant horizon. He is a limit, an idea, and not an historical fact.'<sup>200</sup> Lefebvre writes '...we must historicise the notion, thinking of it historically and socially. And not naively, like those who believed that the new man would suddenly burst forth into history, complete, and in possession of all hitherto incompatible qualities of vitality and lucidity.'<sup>201</sup> The person of this everyday life (*l'homme quotidien*) is both subject and object of becoming.<sup>202</sup> It was a Marxist appropriation of a Nietzschean concept.<sup>203</sup> Though Highmore says 'the conceptualisation of the 'total man' is gradually played down after the 1960s.'<sup>204</sup> Nevertheless the term suggests a unity, a speculative goal, of some sort, and is important for developing a Utopian focus.<sup>205</sup> Shields mentions the total man conceals important humanistic qualities in it.<sup>206</sup> Alienation itself would never be

completely overcome - it was a fact of life - but there were at least levels of it.

Given a context of 'the Total Man', Ross considers concepts of new men in a post war cultural and intellectual history of men. In a chapter entitled 'New Men and The Death of Man' Ross says: 'Henri Lefebvre too held Marx's concept of the "total man" to be the strongest critical weapon against the reduced "economic man" created out of the reified, instrumental relations of Western, Bourgeois, market society.' And Ross compares this with Fanon's "new man" who was produced specifically by the colonial situation, and who - maintained that men change at the same time that they change the world. Ross says that Fanon, to a certain extent, along with Lefebvre, rejoined a tradition of libertarian, existential marxism. Furthermore: 'Fanon's "new man is at once a historical, a physical, and a psychosexual phenomenon." It can be read as a theory of masculinity. Conversely, l'homme or man, as a foundation of western humanism, was under attack 'at the hands of the second of our "new men"' - located by Barthes and 'Structural man.' Structural man, a French invention, and embodied by the structural anthropologist Levis Strauss, mentally lived structures. Though 'Compared to the Fanonian "new Man," structural man was a disembodied creature, a set of mental processes.' Structural man avoided issues of politics and decolonization: notions of subjectivity, consciousness and agency were

replaced by structures and codes. Conversely the utopian new “total” man favoured by existential marxists was unacceptable to structural marxists. Ross says the status of man in Foucault’s ‘Les mots et les choses’ (‘The Order of Things’), was his own dissolution or erasure - French intellectuals announced ‘The death of Man.’ For Fanon the revindication of the status of man was ‘the refusal to be qualified by the masters.’<sup>207</sup>

Lefebvre developed ideas about the everyday and about moments with Constant (see next sub-section) and with the early Situationists. The Situationists, established in 1957, were formed out of the International Lettrists with Debord as one of its members and The International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, with Asger Jorn its founder member (1953).<sup>208</sup> Lefebvre met and worked with Guy Debord and the Situationists on the colonisation of everyday life, an analysis of the 1871 Paris Commune as a situation, and on a theory of moments, during a 5 year friendship. Crucial to Lefebvre and the Situationists was a theory of situations, similar and different to Lefebvre’s theory of moments, and an understanding of the Paris Commune uprising of 1871. Lefebvre’s analysis of the latter, led to accusations of plagiarism about the commune as a festival by the Situationists and to their falling out in 1962.<sup>209</sup> Lebas and Kofman say about Lefebvre that ‘his significant contribution to their urban and socio-political thinking is subsumed in his key work on the critique of everyday life and in

the concept of ‘moments.’’ Significantly perhaps the early situationists had among them a number of artists, including Constant, Jorn, (both ex-Cobra members) and Gallizio.<sup>210</sup> Though within a few years, by 1961, they had either left or been expelled.<sup>211</sup>

Lefebvre wrote that the everyday had been colonised by new technology and consumer society. The colonisation of everyday life itself was an important theme, and seen as an extension of capitalism. It reflected significant social, urban, and political change in France, such as post war decolonisation, the development of new towns, and a new consumer society. Ross states modernization brought with it a whole new range of middle men, and it was above all ‘the unevenness of the built environment of the city, its surroundings and its social geography that came to crystallize, for Lefebvre, the contradictions of post war life.’ That ‘Lefebvre now pushed that theory to apply the insights garnered from an international analysis to new objects: to the domain of interregional relations within France, for example, or the space of domesticity and practices of consumption.’ Furthermore Ross says in terms of contemporary perspective a focus on the everyday is also a means to separate away the historical inheritances of French colonial history. ‘Keeping the two stories apart is usually another name for forgetting one of the stories or for relegating it to a different time frame...For, from this perspective (a



prevalent one in France today) France's colonial history came to an abrupt end, cleanly, in 1962.'<sup>212</sup>

Lefebvre's work developed important thematic links with Guy Debord's about situations and about colonisation. He references Raoul Vaneigem's ideas about alienation. '...Guy Debord, Michele Bernstein and Raoul Vaneigem held long working sessions with him (Lefebvre in 1960 and 1961) in Strasbourg and Nanterre, where the French philosopher taught sociology...'<sup>213</sup> Similarly 'Debord participated in Lefebvre's seminars and was in turn introduced to Raoul Vaneigem and Gerard Lebovichi, the other key members of the Situationists.'<sup>214</sup> Both Lefebvre and the Situationists looked to play, spontaneity and festivity as necessities of daily life.<sup>215</sup> Highmore says 'The productive ground that the Lefebvre and the Situationists shared was the 'revolution of everydaylife.'<sup>216</sup> Debord was to write *The Society of The Spectacle* in 1967 and Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life* in 1967. But the Situationist's view was also a radical revolutionary agenda in contrasts to Lefebvre's. Highmore says 'Perhaps the relationship between the Situationsits and Lefebvre was always in danger of breaking down. The kind of politics of the everyday that Lefebvre favoured always allowed for gradual and reformist revolution.'<sup>217</sup> And finally Lefebvre was also to work with ex Cobra artist, and Situationist, Constant, with ideas about the possible and the future (see last section). Constant was

expelled for visualising or materialising a future city. In retrospect at least, it is to the individuals on the periphery of the Situationists group ('...outer groupuscles, satellite groups, where I was, and where Asger Jorn was too...' <sup>218</sup>) with whom Lefebvre seems to identify, and he mentions Constant's and Jorn's expulsion. However Lefebvre was not to leave until 1962.

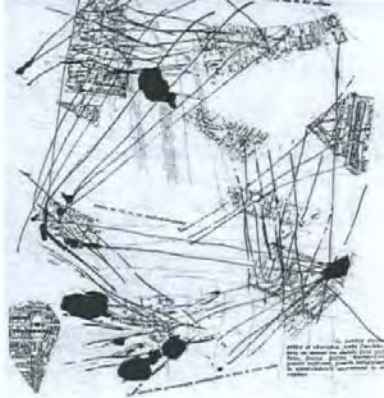
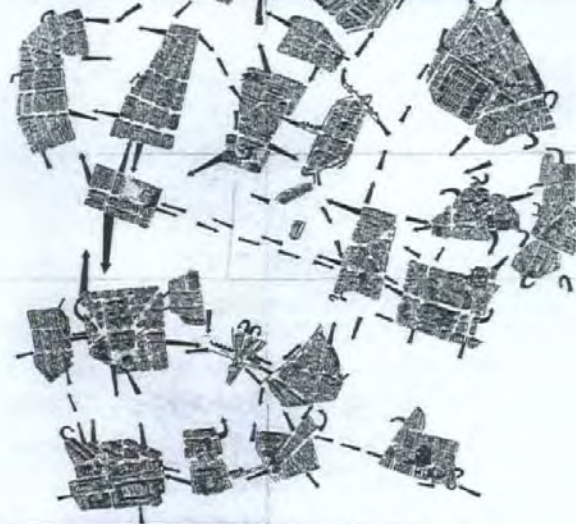
With the expulsion, or moving away, of artists, (though Debord was a poet and film-maker too) the Situationists arguably, developed a more black and white, or radical view, of art, aesthetics and of change. <sup>219</sup> Complicatedly the Situationists claimed not to have abandoned art, but to have reconceptualised it. <sup>220</sup> The Situationists thought Lefebvre's theory of moments too abstract, and too emotive. 'They argued moments were not simply ruptures in everyday temporality but a different experience of temporality that amounted to a unique amount of time.' <sup>221</sup> That change was a practical and political question, not a utopian one. <sup>222</sup> Lefebvre says, for example: 'They more or less said to me during discussions -- discussions that lasted whole nights -- "What you call 'moments,' we call 'situations,' but we're taking it farther than you. You accept as 'moments' everything that has occurred in the course of history (love, poetry, thought). We want to create new moments." And he argues that all that seemed to be left after the theory of situations, that

disappeared very quickly, was the critique it began with; his critique of the everyday.

The Situationists were also to develop ideas of *dérive* and *detournement* that brought their ideas in line with Benjamin's and Lefebvre's, both of whom refer to the Surrealists.<sup>223</sup> Lebas and Kofman place *dérive* in a broader art historical context 'Clearly the notion of *dérive* as urban wandering and meditative observation associated with the transformation of the city by capitalist economic forces has a long history going back to Restif de la Bretonne, Charles Baudelaire and the Surrealists.'<sup>224</sup> They acknowledge 'The *dérive* was therefore a mapping technique, the production of a new aesthetic, a means of locating opportunities for the creation of situations, a subversion of conventions - and altogether enormous fun.'<sup>225</sup> Lefebvre discusses his understanding of the *dérive* as a kind of 'synchronic history' that revealed the idea of a fragmented city, and says it was first and mostly developed in Amsterdam.<sup>226</sup> 'For the Situationists and Lefebvre it was the basis for an analysis of the urban scene.'<sup>227</sup> For example 'Debord, Jorn and the Smithsons alike sought ways of illustrating and addressing the social ecology of the city, professing an empathy with the habitual behaviour of the city's lowly'.<sup>228</sup> Jorn and Debord created sensual maps of inner urban areas with atmospheric intensity as part of their 'psychogeographical' project. Constant went out on *derives* that lasted several days. Debord first suggested that old city maps

could be reappropriated to document hidden psychological structures. In 1956 and 1957 Debord and Jorn produced two such maps; 'Guide Psychogéographique de Paris' and 'The Naked City' (see illustrations). A more nuanced version of the map was prepared at the end of 1957 for 'Mémoires' - Debord and Jorn's collaged book about the early Lettrists.<sup>229</sup>

The psycho-geographic emphasis, and the departure of artists by 1961, meant the term was more about projected psychological structures. It implied the rupture of a new political consciousness or aesthetic, rather than developing out of its everyday, representational and historical development in Lefebvre. These differences thereby are of significant importance for beginning to understand Lefebvre's notions of moments and lived experience. Highmore says 'The radical differences of lived experiences (experiences made up of different historical and spatial representation) are either ignored or played down by the Situationists and result in severe limitations to their geography of everyday life.' Nevertheless he says 'Yet the Situationists provide (however problematically) everyday life theory with a practice and an activism which is often sorely lacking in the more abstract discussions of Lefebvre...'<sup>230</sup>



(the Hague)

2 Guy Debord and Asger Jorn / page from *Mémoires*, 1959 (photo: Tom Haartsen)

3 Guy Debord and Asger Jorn / *The Naked City*, 1957 (photo: Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague)

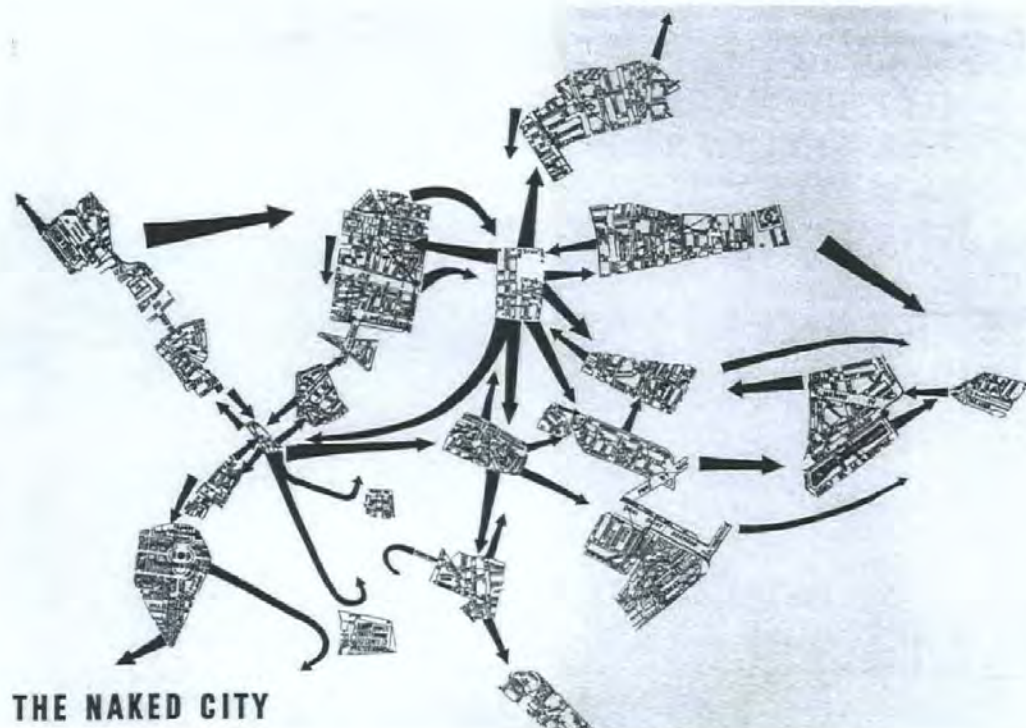
4 Guy Debord / *La vie continue d'être libre et facile* (Life Continues to be Free and Easy) collage, 1959 / gift to Constant (photo: Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague)

# DISCOURS SUR LES PASSIONS DE L'AMOUR

paroles psychogéographiques de la dérive et localisation  
d'usages d'ambivalence

par G. D. DEBORD

SERIE  
PSYCHOGRAPHIQUE  
DE PARIS



3



4



Lorsqu'on lui demande s'il aimerait

WHEN ASKED IF HE WOULD LIKE

un Dubonnet avant le dîner,

A DUBONNET BEFORE DINNER,

mon oncle répond qu'il aimerait

MY UNCLE REPLIES THAT HE WOULD LIKE

un Dubonnet avant n'importe quoi

A DUBONNET BEFORE ANYTHING!

vær i go' form

COSMOS  
SENNEP

DUST

FANS FOR

the present century.  
ever may be thought of their

something  
like horror in the  
best circles.

AIRSCREW

OUTMODDED  
PHILOSOPHY

SOMETHING is wrong, but who  
pulling the wool over whose eyes?

Busoni himself seemed always to have  
been recognized as not only a great

musician but as a musical thinker a great  
who might have resolved the crisis in our music

which has persisted now for half a century. But he also seems to have ultimately failed  
all that he did. His failure is noble

### **Lived Time: History and Oeuvres (works)**

Everyday life suggests the ordinary, but also the repetitive and fragmentary elements of the every day. However Lefebvre also distinguished a certain kind of everyday life from the everyday that developed within modernity.<sup>231</sup>

Everyday life was also a historical development, and needed to be seen within a historical context. Lefebvre argues that everyday life is produced; that it has been different, in different civilisations.<sup>232</sup>

Problematically in many ways, Lefebvre considers the past. His insistence on a critical engagement in everyday, in struggle, colludes to emphasise the present. Yet lived time is a fundamental and complex facet of Lefebvre's thinking about history, that re-contextualises moments. It is a set of thematic threads, and styles, that are explored in qualitative, or descriptive, terms, and in historical terms. These emerge in his work *Introduction to Modernity*, or for example in descriptive, and often situated essays. But they also emerge in a number of other critical themes: lived experience, presence and absence, and symbolism. In communal traditions, architectures, and lifestyle. In Inscriptions and erasures. Essentially these ideas, and their tensions, are inter-connected by Lefebvre's set of interpretations and values that have implications for art and architecture. That is, they are contingent upon, and inform, one another. To an informed question - is lived time about something or other, Lefebvre would likely answer, yes and no. Shields adds Lefebvre's



humanism was an expression of the chance for a fully lived life that is the measure of civilisation.<sup>233</sup>

‘Throughout Lefebvre’s work, the most mysterious asides concern presence.’<sup>234</sup> His ‘deeply humanistic interest in alienation’ is extended from individual moments of presence to social and historical determinations. Alienation becomes about the psychological and the social structures by which they were reproduced. One of his enduring foci was on the saddest aspects of modernity in its alienated dehumanising traits.<sup>235</sup> Lefebvre acknowledges that ‘Any presentation of the problems of the relations between history and (individual) lived experience which fails to centralise the concept of alienation sidesteps the main theoretical and practical issues.’<sup>236</sup>

Shields writes ‘The concept of presence or...presence-absence provides the philosophical underpinnings for Lefebvre’s sociological analyses of everydaylife, of space as a cultural artefact and of ideology as well as the importance of the oeuvre, or unalienated production...’<sup>237</sup> Furthermore ‘He is one of the first to show how ‘modernity’ could be used as a critical classification for social theory, distinct from art history or architectural history or Nietzsche’s philosophical discussions...’<sup>238</sup> Modernity itself is considered in a historical, and mainly European, context: ‘Modernity is a

dialectic of presence and absence.’<sup>239</sup> At its broadest it was about ‘the importance of the planetary integration of cultures and economies...’<sup>240</sup>. Shields writes ‘The advantage of analysing such experiences in terms of presence and absence is that they allow one to seize events and experiences in their phenomenological flow rather than by imposing a pre-defined grid of categories.’<sup>241</sup> And ‘Presence, a pure exception in the undifferentiated, is temporalisation, and this is a remarkable indication of the centrality of time in Lefebvre’s thought on space.’<sup>242</sup>

“Presence is thus central to philosophical debates about ontology because ‘what exists’ is distinguished by its ability to be present. ‘Presence’ also has much to do with questions of epistemology, because ‘what is true’ is often a judgement based on the witness of one’s senses.”<sup>243</sup> It therefore gives a sense of flux to the empirical life of history ‘which could grasp the indeterminacy and changing nature of life itself rather than a *formal* understanding of processes frozen as things.’<sup>244</sup> Yet Lefebvre ascribes greater potential to the constitutive capacity of society to create itself in the first place relative to, for example, Benjamin’s notions of mythic history and nature, and of society dreaming its way through life.<sup>245</sup> ‘For how could we come to understand a genesis, a genesis of the present, along with the preconditions and processes involved, other than by starting with the present, working our way back to the past and retracing our steps’ Lefebvre writes.<sup>246</sup> Lebas and Kofman

emphasise that he challenges the notion of a separate object - history as a series of facts - or of historicism: 'Whilst opposed to historicism...he desired a renewal of *historicité*.'<sup>247</sup> Historicity, '...in philosophy and history...refers to the situation in which people define their existence. In sociology, it covers the manner in which works are produced, distributed and consumed, and the capacity of a society to act upon itself.'<sup>248</sup> The 'capacity of a society to act upon itself' is a central consideration, or gauge, in Lefebvre's thinking. He says '*Living is the practice of overcoming alienation*.'<sup>249</sup>

Elden points out that Lefebvre's work can be seen as an anticipation of critiques of Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History*. The same name to one of Lefebvre's books 'looks at the notion of 'end' with a much more progressive sense, and realises the problems of Nietzsche's 'last man'.'<sup>250</sup> As Lefebvre makes clear: 'If it is true that the founders of history defined it in terms of an end, it is time to discern the sense of that end, not of history.'<sup>251</sup> Lefebvre's discusses preludes to modernity, while *histoire* has the sense of a story, a récit, and a narrative. Elden mentions that Lefebvre's book could be translated as 'The End of a Story'.<sup>252</sup> The traces of history do not make history. And 'if there is nothing fundamental about historical time then history is a fiction, or an abstraction.'<sup>253</sup> 'For Lefebvre, we must define history in terms of an end. This does not merely give history a sense, a

direction, but outside of this sense history cannot be defined and has no sense. Without end history is in chaos.’<sup>254</sup>

Oeuvres develop debates not only about context of the present, but also about the past and its development into the present: decisions of private and public spheres; housing developments; representational processes in power, monuments or architectures; an urban theory of forms; the politics of space; the relationships of the town and the countryside. Yet the most important oeuvres were the creation of the City and the Landscape. Lefebvre even suggests rights to such practices. ‘The most important oeuvres are the city and landscape formed by human cultivation over centuries. To such works, there is an intrinsic human right – the creator’s prerogative not to ownership but to its enjoyment and possession in the deepest sense.’<sup>255</sup>

In the mock interview about a New Romanticism, Lefebvre, or rather his characters, mention a few interesting contexts and anecdotal remarks about lived time. In trying to pin down some of the provenances or processes of Mr B’s thinking, Mr B discusses one of Marx’s ideas of primitive communism to replace communism and agrees - yes and no - to anthropology as a starting point. ‘Yes, an anthropology, because it is a question of grasping man, and man in his totality – the total human phenomenon, if you like (to avoid confusion with ‘the total man.’)<sup>256</sup> And he says yes because there is no one

science to answer a total question. He argues sociology makes a contribution, but it lapses into sociologism, psychology into psychologism, and history into a philosophy of history, or historicism. He critiques Romanticism for disassociating the cosmological principle from the anthropological.<sup>257</sup>

However he also says no to some forms, or assumptions, in anthropology too. For example, no in so far as anthropology becomes culturalism, or structuralism. Lefebvres' is not a structural anthropologist man. No in so far as defining man by generic or specific characteristics, outside of the world, without nature. He says 'I don't believe in being, in essence, or in the existence of man in isolation.'<sup>258</sup> But he does believe in a human nature, '...a nature and a humanity which are inseparable...'<sup>259</sup> Significantly 'This 'human nature' is something which creates itself, practically, by trial and error, starting from nature and moving towards another nature – or, better still, a nature-other-than-itself, through many necessities and many often indiscernible perils.'<sup>260</sup> He calls this praxis rather than philosophy: 'Praxis creates, but not in a vacuum, and not all at once.'<sup>261</sup> He suggests it is not easy to describe this praxis, or its totality. Yet paradoxically suggests there is a totality that production explores, and that has been fragmented. He says the concept of production as creation has accrued too many pseudo-philosophical, aesthetic and poetic overtones.<sup>262</sup>

In terms of connections with art and lived time Lefebvre links Classicism with the state and with power, rather than historical necessity and also argues that Romanticism, while opening minds to the possible, became itself lost in thought and feeling.<sup>263</sup> Secondly he argues 'in the past there have been relatively happy periods – in the thirteenth century, perhaps, and in the first half of the sixteenth. And it's true: to a certain extent I *am* a sixteenth century man.'<sup>264</sup> He is asked, in talking about lifestyle, moments and style - 'aren't you reviving some of the characteristics of certain pre-capitalist cultures or societies?' He is accused of anthropological or ethnographical romanticism by Mr A, of turning back to the Middle Ages, to Greece, and of nostalgia and Romanticism. In contemporary terms Mr B is unable to answer a question about the contributions of third world and emerging nations. 'Before answering (plainly humming and hawing and unwilling to be pinned down): Ahem, er...it's true that some of us have hoped that these people, or their culture, would one day achieve a marriage between spontaneous vitality and industrial technicity.'<sup>265</sup> He is accused of a romanticism towards an archaic past. Though says 'The nostalgia for Paradise Lost, for repetition, for pure nature, strike me as absurd.'<sup>266</sup> Indeed he suggests it swells the coffers of the Club Med.<sup>267</sup> Mr B says humanity is unlikely to find sexual happiness or the brilliance of Hopi culture. Yet he still asks about direct relations between nature and men, and of a new spontaneity built on new foundations. He suggest happiness, like love, can be reinvented. He asks 'How can you

affirm that there will be *one* industrial society...How can you know that there will be one technicist civilization, and only one?<sup>268</sup> And in response to being called archaic, he asks about culture and its production: 'So culture is just one big job lot, take it or leave it? Does it come down to us as a single bequest?'<sup>269</sup>

Symbols and symbolism are also an important facet of Lefebvre's understanding of aesthetics and the lived. They are inter-linked. Historically he argues: 'We are sustained by ancient symbols, affective nuclei which have come down to us from a distant past, symbolizing the direct and immediate interpersonal relations of primitive societies, and the patriarchal or matriarchal blood relations which have been preserved up to the present day in private life...'<sup>270</sup> Furthermore he says Romanticism 'drew its aesthetic lifeblood from symbols which were of a social rather than an inherently aesthetic nature...'<sup>271</sup> He emphasises the depth of the Romantic investigations because 'they become manifest and conscious on a 'certain' level of social practice, for example these symbols cannot be understood without an overall map of the nineteenth century society and its ferments.'<sup>272</sup> He says 'Romantic art fed off and prolonged a creative excitement which came from beyond its own microcosm.'<sup>273</sup> Yet equally he says Classicism develops myths, while Romanticism develops and produces symbols. Yet he bemoans romanticism's retreat to individualism that undermines the potency of



symbolization, and bemoans the replacement of symbols by myths.<sup>274</sup> He says 'Now our era, the twentieth century, shows no trace of any similar attempts to elaborate symbolisms, either in deep-lying strata of society and on the various levels of social consciousness, or in specifically aesthetic activity.'<sup>275</sup> It is these links with art as a social practice, a concern with lived experience and 'an emotional realism,' which Lefebvre elaborates.<sup>276</sup> 'Although he has set himself outside the social and the historical domain, the romantic artist finds himself back within it.'<sup>277</sup>

Lefebvre taps into the pasts of European history. It should not be necessary, he says, to look further afield, outside of European history or outside of his own communal traditions. Though in practical terms, he also does look for examples to other cultures. However he began his research career studying the transformation of a Peasant Community in the Campan Valley in the South of France, 'where he finds clues in the 'studying (of) communal traditions which have persisted to the present day.'<sup>278</sup> In its spatial and architectural form Lived time's qualities are appropriation rather than wholesale reconstruction. Representational spaces were complex because they were cultural, a lived realm, and different from the perceived. They embodied a complex symbolism and Lefebvre's metaphilosophy accepted the world of representations and the imagined in distinction from a world of imitation. They are similar to Lefebvre's *appropriated* rather than *dominated*

space, although exist in its lived and urban dimension.<sup>279</sup> 'An appropriated space *resembles* a work of art, which is not to say it is in any sense an *imitation* work of art' (Lefebvre's emphasis). Examples given are peasant houses, villages, igloos, a street, a site, a square, a Japanese house. He says 'Appropriation cannot be understood apart from the rhythms of time and of life.'<sup>280</sup> They can helpfully be thought of in stylistic, qualitative, and contextual terms.

In a small piece written in 1970 he writes about 'lived' time, and the relevance of practice and understanding of 'real spaces'. He is critical of traditional metaphysics where 'we find the (well-known) hypothesis that intelligible space has nothing in common with real space.'<sup>281</sup> He is critical of the fact that in a traditional metaphysical hypothesis, history is eliminated – 'just like that.' He says 'Knowledge of so-called historical time is said to have nothing in common with 'lived' time.'<sup>282</sup> And he is critical of the fact that the mental realm comes to be separated from the social. Yet, he argues, we also need concepts of time as they gather together the different elements of becoming, which elude the lived. These might include, among others, the biological and the social, the cyclic and the linear.

The individual or everyday level of experience, for Lefebvre then, would be too narrow a definition of the moment. It potentially only includes

transcendent or spontaneous impulses, it focuses exclusively on metaphysical or ontological dimensions, and misses out its everyday or historical contexts. As such it introduces the idiosyncratic and qualitative mix of Lefebvre's provenances of thinking. Lefebvre introduces time as narrow (or individual) and broad (or collective), even within the terms of the moment. Shield explains 'A moment is not an instant, but it is opposed to a stress on simply the passage of time. By 'moment' Lefebvre means that the experience of time passing is variable.'<sup>283</sup> Time is no longer a process of temporal successions, a linear flow of temporality, nor 'a moment in the progress of civilisation.'<sup>284</sup> He says 'This 'Theory of Moments' provides a manner of conceptualising 'presence' that rejects a single vision of totality that would throw out all other viewpoints.'<sup>285</sup> Yet Presence and absence can also be differentiated from moments that are about the here, and the now.'<sup>286</sup> Or from moments and the everyday, that can be commodified, simulated, or trivialised: 'Although people can be stirred into action by moments, the problem is the unpredictability of such experiences.'<sup>287</sup> Moments could be manufactured. The theory of moments could 'be hijacked by carnival promoters and ideologists alike...and Baudrillard pointed out the impossibility of establishing the purely authentic.'<sup>288</sup> Shields concludes 'Instead of time travelling in an arrow-straight line (*conceptual time*), we need to think of lived time qualitatively. It is *involved*.'<sup>289</sup>

Can lived time be theorised? Shields suggests Lived time may be a *form* 'conceived as a thing quite separate from its contents,'<sup>290</sup> but also says Lefebvre does not explicitly call it that. And there are difficulties calling it a form. Primarily doing so can highlight prescriptive and formal capacities rather than regenerative ones. It may be more appropriate to think of it as formation. For example, Lefebvre uses the term 'impure content' perhaps to suggest something of its symbiotic or para-formal substance. Living or the Fully Lived, might be thought of as Lefebvre's critical *content* in history. Though not as an essence and recreative, it is an impure content. These formations are living and making - generated by qualitative tendencies, symbiotic contexts and formative tensions. How else can we understand the statement that "the absolute is *in* the relative' and 'the absolute is *outside* of the relative?'"<sup>291</sup> It suggests a co-creative process, experiences of partial totalities. "Thus he defines moments as 'modalities of presence'. Which are in themselves but glimpses; 'Partial totalities, I see them as "points of view"...each moment is a fragment of totality.' And 'Totality is the sum of these fragments.'"<sup>292</sup> In these moments of presence, according to Shields, are 'striking parallels to Benjamin's notion of the optical unconscious.'<sup>293</sup> "The everyday then, is an undifferentiated space of the mundane interrupted by a primordial form of time."<sup>294</sup> This leads Lefebvre to conclude "It is surely a little explored view of time and space which proposes times self actualisation in space develops from a kernel (i.e. from a relative and not an absolute

origin) that this actualising process is liable to run into difficulties, to halt for rest and recuperation.”

The characteristics of a moment he says ‘defines a form and is defined by a form,’ that ‘It has a certain constancy over time.’<sup>295</sup> Moments create situations but are not the same as a situation. Moments of action, moments of justice, or play, were not philosophical concepts. He says ‘The representation of a form, rediscovered and reinvented on each occasion, exceeds previous conceptions of repetition.’<sup>296</sup> Elden states he therefore ‘challenges abstract reductive understanding of time just as he does space.’ Yet also says the difficulty is however that for Lefebvre ‘time is thus a representation,’ but it is not entirely abstract either.<sup>297</sup>

Shields mentions Lefebvre’s formulations about lived time emphasise notions of recurrence, reversibility, and rhythm that form partial totalities within its living moment. Lived time has a substance, but it is not a thing. This brings it closer to descriptions of time in the novel, poetry and music, for example, Joyce’s *Ulysses* about which Lefebvre writes a eulogy. ‘Time – the time of the narrative, flowing, uninterrupted, slow, full of surprises and sighs, strife and silence, rich, monotonous and varied, tedious and fascinating’ and so on. Shields suggests a metaphor of a river current. The river current would reflect patterns and partial shapes of past and future

possibility in conjunction with its present traces. Yet Lefebvre also seems to make it apparent that it is not a river (though that may be different from a specific river or river current). 'This becoming is not a commonplace flux, an ever-flowing river, a shapeless mobility, a never-ending fluidity, a linear movement in which ephemeral happenings appear and disappear.'<sup>298</sup> And with regards to Proust, Lefebvre suggests time is more contradictory, it is regained though not entirely, and cannot be reduced to fluidity.<sup>299</sup> Lefebvre, in an elegaic prelude about a vision of time says: 'In fascinating simultaneity past, present and future are juxtaposed...'<sup>300</sup> As "cycles within wider cycles", 'wave-harmonics,'<sup>301</sup> or almost Blakean and ecstatic visions. 'Each wave is multiple, polyrhythmic. It is not something simply governed by the sea, the rising tide, the wind. As it rises up in all its inevitability, it contains innumerable smaller rhythms, like an entire world; it gives birth to smaller waves which themselves carry delicate water-movements, small furrows, whorls, lace brocade and foam...'<sup>302</sup> Perhaps they are where "the riddle of recurrence intercepts the theory of becoming."<sup>303</sup> They might helpfully be considered as spirals.

Moments principally emphasise the present and the fully lived. The theory of moments is essentially about the everyday as that is where many of them occur.<sup>304</sup> Yet Lefebvre's writing about time also develops important historical depths. So how can moments relate to the past? How does the past

co-exist with the present? Lived time is complex because “time has more than one writing system.” This implies different kinds of time, inscription, and erasure. Lefebvre asks: “Let everyone look at space around them. What do they see? Do they see time, after all they’re in time...time is in the heart of space.”<sup>305</sup> But it is not, according to Lefebvre, in the heart of modernity’s space: “With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and functionally specialized as this time itself. Lived time loses its form and its social interest...”<sup>306</sup>

Competing notions of time are developed by Lefebvre. Linear time has effectively erased cyclical time as an ideological nexus. While ‘time has more than one writing system,’ there are few remnants of a competing conception to linear time, and this is expressed for example as historical time, cyclical time, and the time of lived experience. It is difficult to see historical time and its qualities because they have been erased. ‘It is reasonable to ask if this expulsion or erasure of time is directed at historical time...time needed for living, time as an irreducible good. Time may have been promoted to the level of ontology by philosophers, but it has been murdered by society.’<sup>307</sup> It may be perceivable in an intellectual form, but its substance has been violently erased. Linear time’s ironing out of cyclical time has left a ‘struggle against time within time itself.’<sup>308</sup> Curiously it leads



to the possibility that 'life is lagging behind what is possible.'<sup>309</sup> Change then was slow. It was not instantaneous. These were the less dramatic 'formants': the appropriated, the lived and the produced. Yet lived time was slow. In *The Production of Space* he writes - 'In nature, time is apprehended in space – in the very heart of space; the hour of the day, the season, the elevation of the sun above the horizon, the position of the moon and the stars...the age of each natural being...each place showed its age and, like a tree trunk, bore the mark of the years it had taken it to grow.'<sup>310</sup> Lebas and Kofman say 'Furthermore Lefebvre never shared the belief in the ability of instantaneous change brought about by spontaneous action; change in everyday life was slow.'<sup>311</sup> In separate essays he concludes 'Our time is no longer visible to us' and mourns 'Alienation has stripped life of everything which blessed its primitive frailty with joy and wisdom.'<sup>312</sup>

In his formulations about history, Lefebvre stresses that time is never separated from space: "Naturally the history of space should not be distanced in any way from the history of time (a history clearly distinct from all philosophies of time in general)."<sup>313</sup> This distinct history is not "a causal chain of historical (i.e. dated) events, or with a sequence whether teleological or not. Similarly "traditional historiography assumes that it can perform cross-sections upon time, arresting its flow without too much difficulty; its analysis tends to fragment and segment temporality."<sup>314</sup> Shields emphasises

‘Hence the importance of a *dialectical* understanding of the flux of empirical life, which could grasp the indeterminacy and changing nature of life itself rather than a *formal* understanding of processes frozen as ‘things’.’<sup>315</sup>

Inconclusively in *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre says, ‘As for times aforementioned inner resources and fundamental availability, these stem from the real origins.’<sup>316</sup>

‘Unlike Hegel’s model, which Marx adopted as a model of historical progress...syntheses were always falling back or apart. Hence they were reversible. History too could thus be reversible...’<sup>317</sup> Societies were changeable. Lebas and Kofman say about Lefebvre ‘And the production of differential space and plural times have direct resonances in Nietzschean thought.’<sup>318</sup> The Theory of moments Elden mentions, owes much to Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s example of time is music. And Lefebvre uses frequently the example of music, for example a Chapter in his last work of Rhythmanalysis. In Nietzsche’s *augenblick*, the blink of an eye, or moment, ‘is the place where past and future collide in the present moment.’<sup>319</sup> Furthermore ‘Nietzsche’s work was also important for Lefebvre for thinking about the tension between memory and becoming; questions of rhythm and style, energy and force.’<sup>320</sup> Elden highlights the importance of Heidegger also stating that Lefebvre was inspired by Proust and Bachelard. Time in Proust is more ‘polyvalent and more contradictory than that of philosophy.

Lived time allows memory and art.<sup>321</sup> That Proustian time cannot be reduced to Bergsonian or Heideggerian time. He writes 'Time is not something lost, but time is loss itself,'<sup>322</sup> and 'That this was a theory of time developed before Lefebvre encountered Marxism.'<sup>323</sup>

It is interesting how Lefebvre's last book is described by Elden: –'...the work on rhythmanalysis is in germ the earlier work on the theory of moments.'<sup>324</sup> Lebas and Kofman point out that 'Unlike his lengthy analysis of space in the production of space, he only sketches out a periodization of the significance of time in society.' According to Lebas and Kofman, his sources are Gurvitch (1896-1965), an influential French sociologist.<sup>325</sup> 'The second major source on time is Gaston Bachelard, who treated *durées* (time periods) as essentially dialectical and built upon undulations and rhythms; they were material, biological and psychological.'<sup>326</sup> They say it is from Bachelard that Lefebvre gets the term rhythm-analysis.<sup>327</sup> Lebas and Kofman say about Bachelard 'His objective was to understand the complexity of life through a plurality of *durées*; each with its own specific rhythm, solidity of linkages and strengths of continuity. There is an alternation between rest and action producing psychic discontinuities in psychic production; the continuity of the psyche is not given but an *oeuvre*.'<sup>328</sup> As a critical philosophy 'Rhythm-analysis...was an idea Lefebvre begins to envisage in *The Production of Space* (1974 205-207) and announced as a project in

Critique de La Vie Quotidienne (1981), and for which he held high hopes as complementary to or as a replacement for psychoanalysis.<sup>329</sup>

Some of rhythmanalysis' qualitative and recreative touchstones are Heidegger's notion of *habiter*, that 'like the process of dressing, playing, eating, forms an open sub-system.'<sup>330</sup> Although the rural, nature, and the everyday were central for Lefebvre, he is, however slightly mocking of 'Heidegger's cult of the artisanal, touchingly sentimental, patriarchal and Germanic dwelling.'<sup>331</sup> And he is critical of Heidegger's exclusive focus on the rural, the meditative and on solitude. Critical 'because of its bearing on Heidegger's trivialisation of everyday life and mistrust of the city, its encounters and chatter.'<sup>332</sup> In his writings about the rural and the urban Lefebvre turns to Heidegger. And less so to Bachelard in his thinking about the house: '...the patriarchal and predominantly rural house described by Bachelard.'<sup>333</sup>

Lefebvre says: For Navarrenx, his home town, – 'as for many other places, villages and towns – a different analogy springs to mind: the image of the seashell. A living creature has slowly secreted a structure...' He says the link between the animal and its shell is precisely the link that one must try to understand. 'History and civilisation in a seashell, this town embodies the forms and actions of a thousand-year-old community which was itself part of

a wider society and culture...' and 'This community has shaped its shell, building and rebuilding it, modifying it again and again according to its needs.'<sup>334</sup> He says 'On the inside and the outside of these old houses the functionally practical and the ornamentally superfluous live side by side in a matter-of-fact way'<sup>335</sup> Lefebvre says that what people want is to be able to hold onto and combine oppositions, such as inside/outside, intimacy and environment, and thereby reinvent a symbolic dimension.'<sup>336</sup> He says 'Life was lived in slow motion, life was *lived* there.'<sup>337</sup> Bachelard writes a chapter in the 'The Poetics of Space,' about 'The Dialectics of Inside and Outside.'<sup>338</sup> These descriptions can also, arguably, be contrasted with facets of Bachelard's 'including nature, shells, the dialectics of large and small.

From 'Seen from a Window' 'he (Lefebvre) attempts to counteract the dominance of the visual which accompanies an abstract, violent and phallic space.'<sup>339</sup> He criticises the architectural detachment from space. Lefebvre criticises the contempt against space, the body and cyclical time - 'Starting from the everyday rhythms of the body and its subjection to training and rules (dressage) he proceeds to analyse capitalism as not only the production of classes, but also as a system that is built upon contempt of the body and its lifetime.'<sup>340</sup> He espouses greater tactility, the living body as a store ' that Western philosophy had abandoned',<sup>341</sup> and of integrating rather than 'constructing a rampart against the tragic and death.'<sup>342</sup> The body, he says, 'is

the most basic form of the production of time.'<sup>343</sup> Yet he describes a living polyrhythmic body composed of diverse rhythms, like an aesthetic arrangement, where beings, entities, and bodies, are grasped in space-time, including houses and buildings, towns and landscapes. He says a body is a living organism, and so is a town, but he is not reducing the latter to a biological organism, but to a plurality of rhythms, associations and interactions.<sup>344</sup> Each has its own interaction and rhythm. Simultaneity and symphonically are words used to describe it.<sup>345</sup>

In his final essay about Mediterranean cities he says 'When rhythms are lived they cannot be analysed.'<sup>346</sup> He suggests it is like dance or music, like listening.<sup>347</sup> It is their historical and everyday dimension that is at the heart of the lived. A Rhythmanalyst who strolls with his thoughts and emotions is 'More sensitive to times than to spaces, to moods rather than images, to the atmosphere than particular events, he is strictly speaking neither psychologist, nor sociologist, nor anthropologist, nor economist: however he borders on each of these fields in turn and is able to draw on the instruments that the specialists use.'<sup>348</sup> He suggests it is a portrait of someone who does not yet exist, though he would have some points in common with a psychoanalyst.<sup>349</sup> Yet he is critical of the dividing up of space and time, including historical time and lived time. They also have a spatial context, or a rhythm. He calls this a localised time, or a temporalised space. Venice, as a

theatrical city, is an example, where civil and social time withdraws itself from linear, measured and state time. The stairway for example becomes for Lefebvre 'A link between spaces, the stairway also ensures a link between times: between the time of architecture (the house, the enclosure) and urban time (the street , the open space , the square and the monuments).'<sup>350</sup>

In 'Notes on the New Town' he says 'Above all think of the polycentric cities of Greece. The Agora, the temple and the stadium regulated not only the way inhabitants moved about, but also their interests and their passions, in an organic way.'<sup>351</sup> He describes the medinas of Muslim cities where the representation of the self and of the other, and where complex transitions and reciprocities between the public and the private,' are not separate from its architecture.<sup>352</sup> Representations of the other are those turned outward, towards the public, while representations of the self are turned towards the private. He says there are multiple transitions between 'the bedroom, the apartment, the house, the street, the square and the district, finally the town...'<sup>353</sup> His descriptions of Mediterranean cities, meditations about church and rural life, his intimate knowledge of his home town, Navarrenx, in a sociological context, his visions, all touch upon his belief in the possibility of different lived times, spaces, and architectures.



### **The present/future; ideals for living and the possible**

About the possible and the future, Lefebvre's romanticism inflects a mix of familiar themes and tensions. Utopia was the possibility of change, '...and it presupposes some vision of, and belief in, individual potential.'<sup>354</sup> Lebas and Kofman say, 'Only the poet could really know the city: therefore, planning as *poesis* belonged to the artist, for only the artist could transform everyday life into a practical utopia.'<sup>355</sup> Yet *poesis* brought together a disparate set of contexts that included change, planning and power. It was here that *poesis*, *oeuvres*, and change, increasingly focussed on the urban. In part, it was a focus that was also a reflection of, and a response to, a period of rapid modernisation in France that affected cities, the countryside, and that transformed lifestyles.<sup>356</sup>

Lebas and Kofman say (quoting Latour and Combes) 'Today, utopias have been discredited, but they are necessary for thinking about the future...'<sup>357</sup> In 'Mapping the futures', Ruth Levitas says the future introduces ideas into a critical minefield of postmodern concern.<sup>358</sup> According to Levitas, 'the solution, however, is not to call for more and better utopias, more and better images and maps of possible futures. These will follow when we have better analyses of the present which identify points of intervention, paths and agents of change.'<sup>359</sup> In some ways, Lefebvre grappled over the course of his career with many of these kinds of questions. Lefebvre discarded his project

on the theory of moments in the 1920s partly because of his concern that historicity was being marginalised in the process.<sup>360</sup> Lefebvre's thinking "... is however, utopian thinking grounded in the modern world and the way ordinary people experience it."<sup>361</sup> The Situationists, for example, criticised Lefebvre for 'failing to go beyond the present order.'<sup>362</sup>

Gardiner asks "Are not "utopia" and "everyday life" thoroughly incongruous, even incompatible phenomena?"<sup>363</sup> Yet he establishes a tradition of Utopia and everyday life in French Social thought. This includes the intellectual legacy of Fourier in the early nineteenth century, the Surrealists (the later writing of Breton, circe post 1930, Aragon, Eluard, Péret, and Soupault), the ideas developed of Henri Lefebvre, and the work of De Certeau. He establishes points in common that include: concerns about the limitations of an 'abstract utopianism'; 'the importance of bringing "lived life" into closer proximity to our understanding of society and history'; that genuine sociality exists outside of the structures and institutions of the state; and a concern with the question of happiness, that is bound up with the body, sensuality, pleasure, play, fantasy and desire, and the role they might play in any emancipatory project. It could be argued that some of the elements of the Cobra movement (although not French) could also be added and contrasted here. There are also strands of thought, from a specifically post-Lefebvrian reading in the architectural everyday that explore the terms of change within

the ordinary and the everyday.<sup>364</sup> Lebas and Kofman say 'Although his thinking on the urban demonstrates the qualities of the romantic revolutionary, it should not be dismissed as hopelessly optimistic.'<sup>365</sup> Lefebvre's thinking about space and time was mapped and re-mapped over the course of his career.

In the 1950s Lefebvre's concern moved from rural sociology to the everyday and to the city. In the 1960s, influenced by the Situationists, he wrote about experimental utopias.<sup>366</sup> From Lefebvre's first specific writing about urbanism in 1961, he continued the theme in texts such as *Introduction to Modernity* (1962), *Le Droit à la Ville* (1968), *Du Rural à l'urbain* (1970) to *The Production of Space* in 1974.<sup>367</sup> In the 1970s he focused on space as well as on a global picture. Shields states in terms of the latter, that in 'The Production of Space', he presents confusing and generalised swathes of history and relations of globalization. However his project returns to relevance when he takes aim at the future, proposing the possibility of generating a new spatialisation...<sup>368</sup> Brazilian favellas, for example.<sup>369</sup> And in the 1980s and 1990s he returned to the everyday, to the urban, and to the theory of moments - a project first begun in the 1920s. The sub heading of *Rhythmanalysis*, his last work, although written in the early 80s and not published until 1992 because a publisher could not be found, is 'space, time and the everyday.'

Lefebvre's critical philosophy about the possible and utopia is informed by thought, and by fieldwork. Shields writes 'To understand totality meant understanding the relationship between what was possible in the future - projective reason - and the existing conditions of everyday life.'<sup>370</sup> Or Lebas and Kofman acknowledge 'Transduction as a method involves developing the theoretical object from the information and problematic posed by reality. It injects rigour into utopian knowledge.'<sup>371</sup> The future is developed out of an understanding of the present. Lebas and Kofman mention that Utopia also begins with reflexive thought. 'With ideas about social practice and the human body, with 'how societies generate their social space and time, the rational spaces conceived by technocrats and bureaucrats, and the spaces of everyday life.'<sup>372</sup> It requires thinking about the possibility of a plurality of times, and the activity of its production. 'Urban society was one of plural and differential times' and 'that is why we must struggle against a society of 'indifference', not just by producing discourses but also in the way we live 'differentially.'<sup>373</sup> Or he says about dialectics: 'It is not really an analysis of becoming, nor is it construction or production...On the contrary it offers a strategy (without the absolute certainty that the goal will be reached). No Lacunae. No flaws, no glib continuities. Which means possibilities, uncertainties, opportunities and probabilities.'<sup>374</sup> Not to think about the future, Shield says, and "...to insist on keeping our feet on the ground' is to

refuse Lefebvre's method of projecting the impossible-possible' of utopia in order to inspire small achievements in our lives.''<sup>375</sup> Without thinking about future there is no sense of creating it. As Lefebvre notes 'utopia today is the possible of tomorrow.'<sup>376</sup>

'Ruth Levitas argues for the necessity of utopia because of its potential for social transformation.' Utopias or alternative struggles are themselves agents of change and participation. Foreclosure about the future can be at risk of marginalising 'any commitment to an alternative.'<sup>377</sup> And of marginalising agents that engage with an existing narrative, as a recreative possibility. Shields writes 'These 'works' or Oeuvres are an antidote to alienation because they too are representations that make an abstract possibility, or even an impossible utopia 'present' for the audience and creator.'<sup>378</sup> Lefebvre considers Modernity itself as a situation, something constructed: '...modernity is a situation and not an essence. Meanings stem and feed into situations.'<sup>379</sup> It is also better to consider the future and utopia because: 'The worst utopias are those which do not call themselves as such but which, in the name of positivism, impose the harshest constraints.'<sup>380</sup>

Elden says it is from Nietzsche that Lefebvre derives the term possible-impossible. 'What is there embedded in the past becomes present through a 'realisation of the possibilities objectively implied in the past.'<sup>381</sup> In terms of

the possible Elden points to Lefebvre's dialectic, which Lefebvre summarises as the regressive-progressive, and that looks to the past and to the future - how cities emerge, how states function, how everyday life changes. He says Lefebvre's call for a new romanticism has not really been taken up. Interestingly Elden says Lefebvre rarely provides a positive alternative to the problems he identifies, but he includes autogestion, rights and citizenship (though rights and citizenship appear in fewer places). Autogestion literally means 'self-government' though it is not a magic formula or something that will solve all problems.<sup>382</sup> Lefebvre argues Autogestion is relevant to debates over the organisation of space and political participation. Lebas and Kofman say in the 1980s 'Lefebvre turned to an examination of rights within a new political culture,' having launched a group called Autogestion in 1978.<sup>383</sup> It was initially concerned with management in the workplace, and local democracy. It developed into ideas about new citizenship for a different social life, a more direct democracy, and a civil society based not on an abstraction but on space and time as they are lived.'<sup>384</sup> And he developed an interest in the treatment of space and time in information technology.<sup>385</sup> Writing in the 1970s and in terms of rights he discusses the right to the shaping of the city and the right to be different. Elden says 'His discussion of the confrontation between 'homogenising powers and differential capacities' has substantial overlap with the work of feminism, race and queer

theory...<sup>386</sup> Just as the concept of alienation needed to be developed, so too everydayness and the concept of difference.<sup>387</sup>

Themes about the urban and the possible include the transformation of the French countryside and of cities; post war planning and the technocratic shaping of space; the ludic or lived qualities of festivals; phallic spaces and control of the body; the manipulations of time and capital. Other contexts Lefebvre explored were: suburbia, land rights, leisure time, rights, the built environment, architectures, local democracy. Philip Wander indicates that when it comes to outlining real possibilities, Lefebvre, along with Erich Fromm, 'draw a great deal from village life..., artisanship... and the individual...'<sup>388</sup> Lebas and Kofman acknowledge that Lefebvre's urban critique cannot be juxtaposed with planning or non-planning, in the sense of anarchy or disorder. For Lefebvre, Capitalist planning is not a practice of order but of power executed by the state. However neither is this to say that everyday life has not been planned either, for example great cities of the past. Yet importantly for Lefebvre, all great cities had been planned or ordered but '...their planning had another ontological genesis generated by the tragedy of the ineluctability of death, and the vitality of the ludic, the sacred and sexuality – all sustained by a collective engagement.'<sup>389</sup> In some ways it is a confusing combination of ideas in that they stress amorphous qualities, whose scope or manifestation in the present is difficult to gauge.

Lefebvre writes about non-linear time and differential space and says 'that feminitude will revolt against phallic domination is inevitable, but it would be regrettable if it were to substitute a uterine space.'<sup>390</sup> This suggests a uterine space and something else, though he does not elaborate or make these terms clear. In terms of the body 'He does not however elaborate at length what would be a dialectical relationship between the production of the sexualized body and its relationship to and positioning in lived and conceived spaces.'<sup>391</sup> Nevertheless in a theoretical placement 'Lefebvre criticised phenomenology for positing an absolute conscience, with no relation to social practice or influenced by nature, the body and the external world, and eliminating mediations, becoming, time and history, and substituting substances for them.'<sup>392</sup> Yet some of his ideas about previsionary developments, for example, in a chapter 'The Rhythmanalyst: a previsionary portrait' it is not at all clear what a rhythmanalyst is, or really does.

In *Introduction to Modernity*, in his mock interview, Lefebvre, or Mr A and Mr B, talk about utopianism. Mr B says '...the new utopianism we can see developing all around us really is new. Utopianism is testing itself out; it is living itself; imagination is becoming a lived experience, something experimental; instead of combating or repressing rationality, it is incorporating it.'<sup>393</sup> He says 'You should also note that the possible and the



utopian method can no longer be synonymous with foresight, prophecy, adventurism, or the vague consciousness of the future.<sup>394</sup> The possible supersedes both philosophy and art. He says lifestyles are more important than works, and are defined by actions. His conviction is that only relatively small groups can produce a way of life, as mediators for larger groups. And that his experimental utopia also seeks to create 'expressivity, language, and embodying a moment of totality.'<sup>395</sup> Having left the Communist Party, he writes 'I want a complete break with the ideology of the left.'<sup>396</sup> It is for example to Paul Klee who he turns to and quotes: 'The world in its present form is not the only possible world,' to Gorki's third reality, and to Ernst Bloch – 'What we are is coming towards us.'<sup>397</sup> In fleshing it out he suggests a heading that emphasises the moment and the present: 'To live Means To Open Up Possibilities...The Most real Moment, the Present, Is a Door which Opens on to Possibilities.'<sup>398</sup> Though he does also include not yet realised forms of socialism as a possibility.

Mr B emphasises the aleatory - the development of chance - though he says it is not pure chance, it is the possible and the impossible. He points out that the aleatory has been developed in electronic music, painting as well as in physics and cybernetics.<sup>399</sup> Yet he describes the relationship of the impossible-possible as similar to that of the child and the adult, specifically the father. The world of childhood is 'a rich and undefined sea of

possibilities,' (though not in the sense fetishized by Romanticism.)<sup>400</sup> And 'The father is the *possible impossibility* which is revealed through the child's present moment and transfixes it; he is what the child will become...The father is what is nearest and what is furthest away, intimate and inaccessible, the self and the other, threatening it and making it fruitful.'<sup>401</sup> He says this is the field that subsumes Freud but that it includes something else as well: 'the field of individual and social consciousness – that is, the semantic field.'<sup>402</sup> Conversely, for the adult the figure of the child is a field of undefined possibilities that he calls the *impossible possibility*. He suggests possibilities and impossibilities are found together. For parents or grandparents the child is both the future yet also pushes them towards their end. These are not 'structured' realities, nor individual consciousnesses, but 'movements in the field of possibilities: the dialectic of the possible and the impossible.'<sup>403</sup> Finally he suggests the possible as God, rather than as a presence. Because he is the possible he is also the impossible.<sup>404</sup>

### **Lefebvre and Constant's Architecture.**

To understand some of the more practical implications through architecture of Lefebvre's ideas about Utopianism, his link with ex Cobra artists Constant is instructive. Lefebvre took considerable interest in the architecture of Constant. In an account of the most significant thinkers on his book *Le retour de la dialectique*, that he said he could count with his fingers, one of them

was Constant, and his writings 'Pour une architecture de situation' published in 1953.<sup>405</sup> In an interview with Ross about Situationism, Lefebvre mentions the Cobra group, Jorn and Constant; though he highlights the influence of Constant in Cobra. Lefebvre says 'But I'd like to go farther back in time, because everything started much earlier. It started with the COBRA group. They were the intermediaries: the group made up of architects, with the Dutch architect Constant in particular and the painter Asger Jorn and people from Brussels -- it was a Nordic group, a group with considerable ambitions. They wanted to renew art, renew the action of art on life.'<sup>406</sup> And he says 'It was an extremely interesting and active group, which came together in the 1950s, and one of the books that inspired the founding of the group was my book *Critique of Everyday Life*. That's why I got involved with them from such an early date. And the pivotal figure was Constant Nieuwenhuys, the utopian architect...'<sup>407</sup>

Kofman and Lebas say 'Henri Lefebvre held Constant Nieuwenhuys in high esteem, considering him to be the leading figure behind what has been labelled situationist architecture.'<sup>408</sup> His architecture they say 'paralleled – and was surely indebted to – Lefebvre's concept of moments...'<sup>409</sup> They write 'In turn, Constant provided him with elements for a practical utopia.'<sup>410</sup> Furthermore '...Constant's urban writings and later models, paintings and drawings, inspired Lefebvre to consider another possible way of planning in

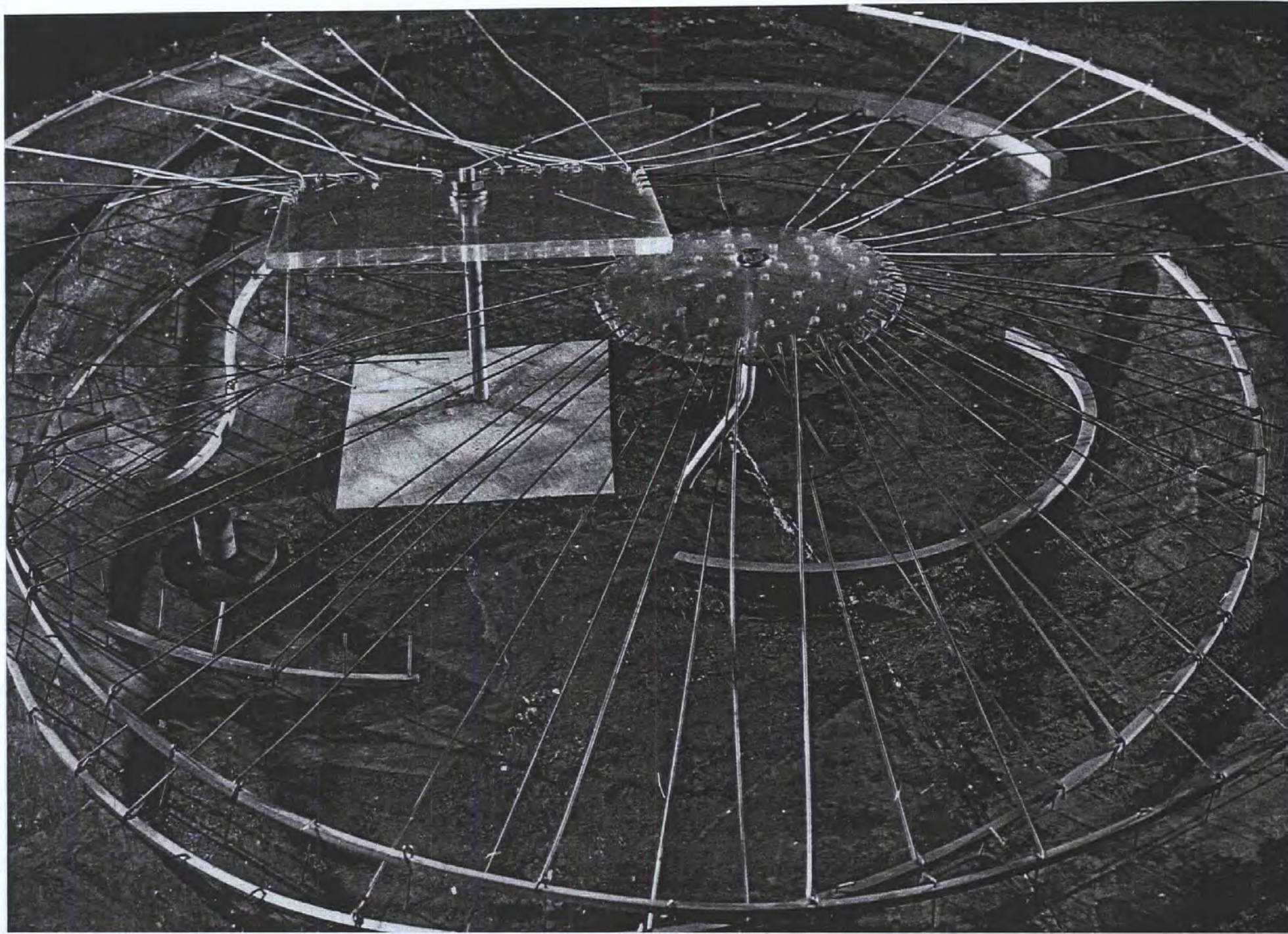
the future...'<sup>411</sup> Lefebvre makes a direct link with Constant's work and the Provos in the interview with Ross.<sup>412</sup> And he refers to the fact that he met Constant (around the same time as meeting Guy Debord) and says he went at least ten times to visit the Provos in Amsterdam to see what form the movement was taking.<sup>413</sup> This is a strand of thinking that Birtwhistle articulates in a context of writing about post-Cobra, though while not attributing the counter-cultural movement in the 1960s directly to Constant's influence, says '...but it is not too far-fetched to suggest that Constant and Cobra prefigured in some important respects the primitivism that was to mark the counter-culture of the 1960s.'<sup>414</sup> He also says: 'Constant himself even helped to bridge the historical gap between Cobra and counter-culture. In the mid-1960s, the Dutch youth movement Provo embraced Constant's ideas on the 'homo ludens' from his current project for *New Babylon* and went on to create 'happenings' on the streets on Amsterdam in protest against the establishment.'<sup>415</sup>

Lebas and Kofman write 'For Lefebvre, the Cobra movement and later the Situationists (until their split) shared similar views on a project of recovery based on the unity of the lived and the conceived in everyday life.'<sup>416</sup> Similarly 'Both Constant and Lefebvre re-appropriate planning as part of a creative act: poiesis (to employ Lefebvre's rather Constant's term.)'<sup>417</sup> Lefebvre 'distinguishes between the *utopian* (concrete ideas) and the *utopist*

(abstract dreamer). For example Constant's New Babylon project represented one such oeuvre for Lefebvre in its own right, and not as a futurist utopia.<sup>418</sup> It was an emancipatory praxis. For Lefebvre utopia was not a historical break 'but part of a conscious process of re-appropriation of fundamental rights – to the city, the body, work and play – and as such gives it sense and purpose.'<sup>419</sup> Yet 'Constant is the prototype and leading exponent of a modern utopian who works in a concrete utopian schema but claims to be an abstract dreamer.'<sup>420</sup>

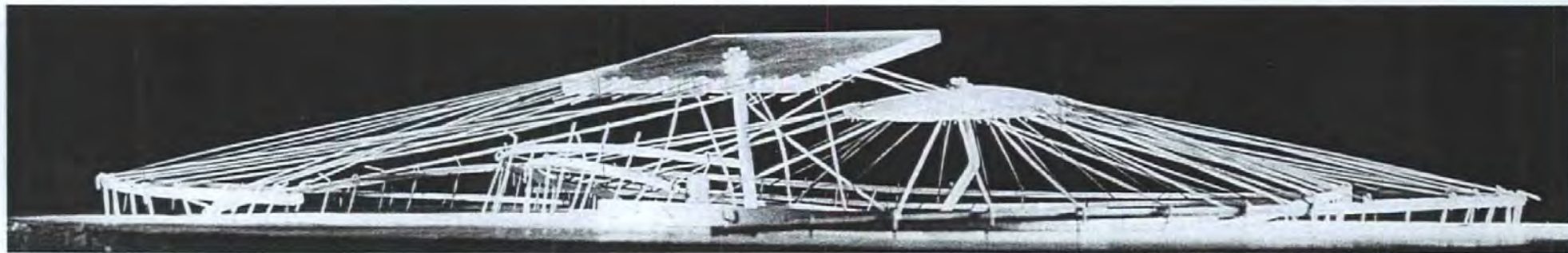
To consider Constant's contribution to Lefebvre's thinking Lebas and Kofman first explore his ideas within the context of the Situationists, and its immediate pre-history, approximately 1956-1960, the date of Constant's meeting with Debord to Constant's expulsion from the Situationists.<sup>421</sup> They also highlight the emerging facets of differences within the Situationists that have tended to be blurred. They say the material substance of Constant's ideas about unitary urbanism 'began in 1956 quite independently from Debord, with a model for a gypsy camp in Alba' (see illustrations).<sup>422</sup> Other strands in Constant's work that developed independently of the situationists, in art and architectural terms might include: his Cobra and post Cobra (pre-situationist) career: his early architectural practice, links with an architect Gilbert in 1954, and their idea of a magazine on the theme of art and habitat







Gypsy Camp) / stainless steel, aluminum,  
plexiglass, oil on wood / h 21 cm ø 130 cm  
(photo 1, 3: Victor E. Nieuwenhuys / 2: Bram  
Wisman)

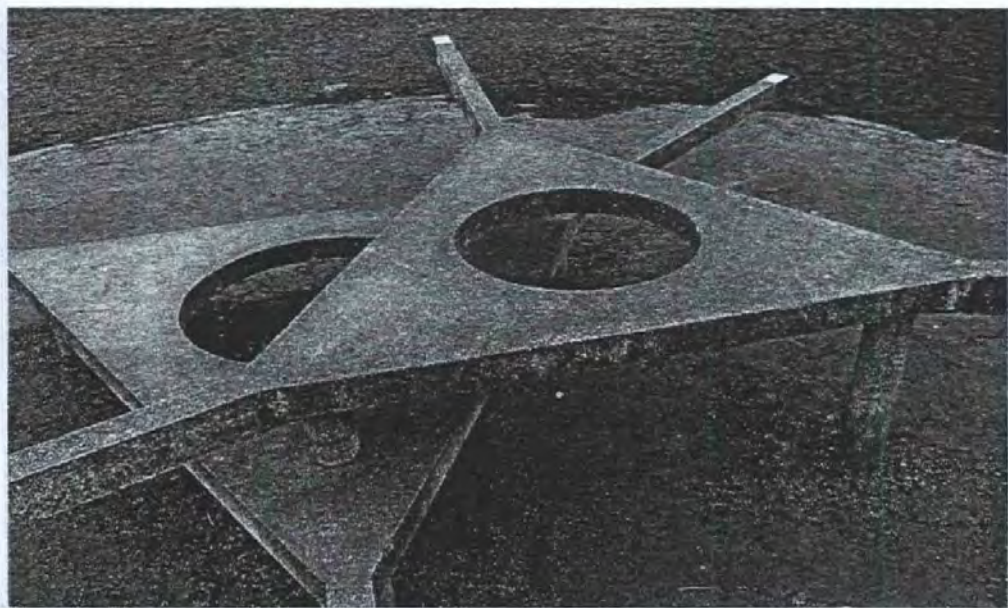


(see illustrations).<sup>423</sup> Constant published an article in 1955 about the production of a habitat.<sup>424</sup>

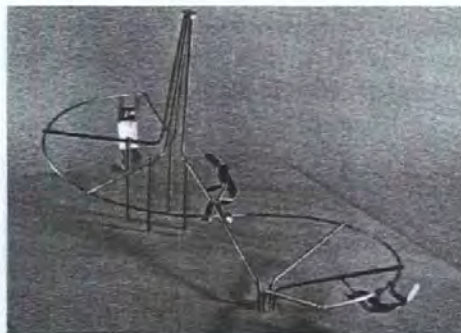
Interestingly it is to Constant's early texts that Lefebvre links some of the qualitative provenances of a situated theory of moments. He says 'The idea of a new moment, of a new situation, was already there in Constant's text from 1953.'<sup>425</sup> And other links include his collaboration in the early 50s with Aldo Van Eyck, who was also involved with Cobra, and Constant's text about 'Spatial Colourism' written in 1953.<sup>426</sup> This is a text that Lebas and Kofman think Lefebvre refers to, on three occasions. About it Lefebvre says 'This was a fundamental text based on the ideas that architecture would allow a transformation of daily reality. This was the connection with *Critique de la vie quotidienne*: to create an architecture that would instigate the creation of new situations.'<sup>427</sup>

Wigley mentions Constant's project about the future, *New Babylon*, was part of an experimental tradition of architecture in the late 50s that absorbed the conceptual lessons of Team 10, but also changed the trajectory significantly. There were then non-situationist and architectural influences. 'Constant's work had not suddenly 'become' architectural when he came into contact with the Situationists and their theories of urban life. His constructions had been carefully positioned at the threshold to architecture and slowly moved

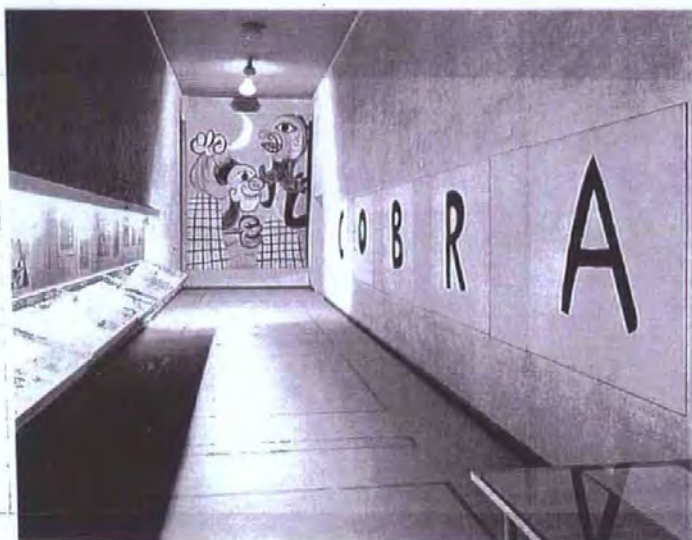




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- 1 Installation view Cobra exhibition, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1949
- 2 Constant working on *Eivormige Constructie* (Egg-shaped Construction), 1957 (photo: Bram Wisman)
- 3 Cover of Stedelijk Museum exhibition catalog *Constant / Bibliotheque d'Alexandrie, Paris, 1959* (photo: Tom Haartsen)



across it for a number of years.’<sup>428</sup> For example the rejection of the Garden city, the abolition of master planning, the ‘streets-in-the-air’ concept developed by the Smithsons in 1953, and new structural techniques.<sup>429</sup> Significantly in terms of differences between Constant’s New Babylon project and a Cobra aesthetic, he says the infinite rearrangement of the environment, and the displacement of closed physical space to an ‘architectural complex’ ‘cannot be associated with the spontaneous gestures of the Cobra artists or the action painters.’<sup>430</sup>

Constant claims about unitary urbanism: ‘The continual creation and re-creation of modes of behaviour requires the endless construction and reconstruction of their setting. This then, is unified urbanism.’<sup>431</sup> Similarly Debord defines unitary urbanism as based ‘not on free, poetic lines and forms – in the sense that lyrical abstract painting uses those words – but rather on the atmospheric effects of rooms, hallways, streets, atmospheres linked to gestures they contain.’<sup>432</sup> Conversely Wigley mentions that ‘While Team 10 proposals are explicitly based on the preservation of the house, New Babylon is based on its vaporization.’<sup>433</sup> He says the Smithsons ‘associated their schemes with the random aesthetic of action painting by Jackson Pollock, the related art brut of Jean Dubuffet, and the work of their independent group colleague Eduardo Paolozzi...’<sup>434</sup> A Team 10 aesthetic developed the everyday house as its paradigm. For example: ‘The house, the shell which

fits man's back, looks inward to family and outward to society and its organization should reflect this duality of organization. The looseness of organization and ease of communication essential to the largest community should be present in this, the smallest. The house is the first definable element.'<sup>435</sup>

Constant's collaboration with the Situationists was also significant. Constant first heard about unitary urbanism at a congress organised by the IMIB called The First World Congress of Free Artists, held in Alba in September 1956.<sup>436</sup> He collaborated with Debord, and contributed nine of the eleven points about unitary urbanism, and after fine-tuning these were published as the Amsterdam Declaration.<sup>437</sup> He worked with Debord who came up with the name New Babylon. Lefebvre's writing about the urban and the everyday can be compared thematically, for example, with Constant's 1960 article about 'Unitary Urbanism.'<sup>438</sup> Constant focuses on post war developments, he critiques technocratic developments of urbanism and town planning, and bemoans the loss of the everyday and of culture. 'The slavish existence of living, working and recreation cannot possibly constitute the starting point for building our living environment, the starting point for a creative urbanism.'<sup>439</sup> He references the ludic and Huizinga's 'Homo ludens.'<sup>440</sup> He highlights – a transformation of habits, or 'way of life or lifestyle' and a change in the material environment to produce a dynamic urbanism. And he

looks closely at the concept of 'social space,' and its cultural significance.<sup>441</sup> Similarly in 'New Babylon: Outline of a Culture,' (1965) he discusses notions of time, leisure time, creativity, and collective ownership of the land, that can be contrasted with Lefebvre's ideas, especially about the everyday.<sup>442</sup>

Lebas and Kofman say, 'Very often unitary urbanism is simply treated as the translation of *dérive* and psychogeography and of interest only for architects and planners. Yet it represented much more. Constant himself as we have noted, envisaged it as a model for a way of living and for cities of the future.' Furthermore, 'More than any of the Situationists, Constant saw the necessity of embracing technology for the purpose of cultural production.'<sup>443</sup> And Constant brings *dérive* projects back to the architectural and to specific projects.<sup>444</sup> The notion of *dérive* was a familiar one to Lefebvre – he discusses it in the interview with Ross - yet in similar and unresolved ways to Constant, it was unitary urbanism and its particulars, rather than the psychogeographic that was the more significant link.

In terms of aesthetics both shared ideas about collective creativity, and a realm of creativity independent of individual aesthetic considerations. For Lefebvre the city was not a work of art in the sense of an aesthetic or architectural product, but 'the work of art is valued foremost for the

collective relations embedded in it.’<sup>445</sup> Though for Constant, ‘the maker, the architectural, artefactual dimensions of this ideal of planning are far less important than creating ambiances which stimulate creativity in New Babylonians...’<sup>446</sup> Yet ironically, for Lefebvre it is the artists, poets, and wanderers, who find the possibilities of re-appropriation in fractured spaces, while for Constant it would be the Situationists.<sup>447</sup>

Through Constant, a context and a comparison, though not an equivalence, can be found for Lefebvre’s ideas of recovery.<sup>448</sup> However specific levels of complexity are added by the differences between Lefebvre and Constant in comparison with Constant’s differences with Debord and Jorn. Debord, for example, insisted ‘that there can be no situationist painting or music but only a situationist use of these means’ and he used the terms situationist architecture and situationist architect.<sup>449</sup> But with Constant’s resignation in 1960, and the branding of his work as what to avoid, Debord clarified his outlook that rejected a formal and architectural contribution to the situationist future.

There were also important differences and debates between Jorn and Constant – Constant strongly identified with an aesthetic that limited an individual art form, he was critical of art, and favoured technology and multi-media. Jorn identified with the artistic, the traditional arts, and to some

extent, the polemical, though he rejected machines and also developed a more light-hearted and humorous approach, that was at odds with the Situationist's radical intentions.<sup>450</sup> Jorn found 'His (Debord) support for the iconoclasts against the artists was unacceptable.' Although Jorn continued to support the Scandinavian, German, and Dutch breakaway groups, and provided the Situationists with financial support.<sup>451</sup> Significantly Jorn continued with painting, sculpture, and with a fascination for history and archaeology – his link with the Situationists and Situationist architecture was only a small part of his artistic and intellectual career. Jorn's work for example developed an artistic, critical and photographic survey of 10,000 years of Scandinavian Folk Art through the setting up of the Institute of Comparative Vandalism in same year he left the situationists, 1961.<sup>452</sup> In terms of re-appropriation, Lefebvre and Jorn also shared some similar contexts of thinking – in facets of their dialectical material outlook a link is suggested by Birtwhistle.<sup>453</sup> However there is no record of Jorn and Lefebvre meeting.<sup>454</sup> The contingencies of each set of links need to be read in their specificity. However in terms of manifesting the possible and its recovery it was Constant with whom Lefebvre worked.

Constant maintained a strong polemical stance against painting, (though also returned to painting) and maintained a critical stance advocating a radical and future architecture. The major problem with this is that few people would

actually want to live in New Babylon. However the formal status of art that was excluded by him, was, arguably, also unresolved in the architecture of New Babylon. New Babylon was 'an experimental thought and play model.'<sup>455</sup> Similarly the psychogeographic images of Debord and Jorn 'were very influential on the development of New Babylon, which precisely takes the form of a psychogeographic map.'<sup>456</sup>

Constant writes "New Babylon 'is just a symbol, a symbol for the integration of creative and social activity,' whose form is necessarily unclear."<sup>457</sup> Yet to what extent was it also a putting aside of practical concerns in the present because of its romantic ideals. It projected in social and creative terms the not yet formed. Constant also considered New Babylon in the context of the labyrinth and of painting (see illustrations).<sup>458</sup> 'It is not that Constant simply rejected the Cobra mentality outright. Traces of his early paintings remain in New Babylon.'<sup>459</sup> Constant's models were largely hand-made, his experimental ethic meant his work came to be presented in multimedia form; theory, collage, drawings, photographs and fragments of maps, and although he maintained an architectural outlook he returned to painting in the late 1960s (see illustrations).<sup>460</sup> Wigley says 'Clearly Constant had not simply abandoned art for architecture. While becoming more like an architect than an architect, he held onto the identity of an artist.'<sup>461</sup> The formal status of New Babylon, in artistic terms, was



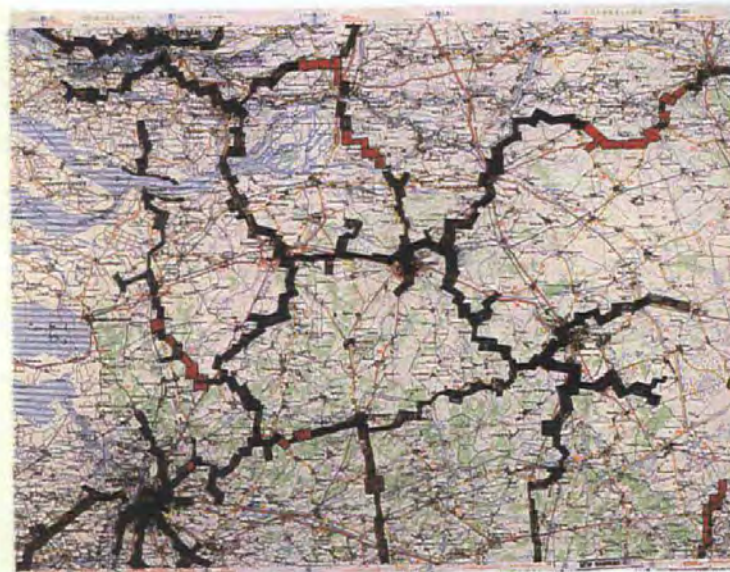


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- 1 New Babylon/Holland / ink on map  
50 x 59 cm
- 2 New Babylon/Rotterdam / ink on map  
48 x 61 cm
- 3 New Babylon/Zuid-Nederland (South of  
Holland) / ink on map / 49 x 63 cm
- 4 New Babylon/Antwerpen (Antwerp)  
ink on map / 52 x 64 cm
- 5 New Babylon/Ruhrgebiet (Ruhr Region)  
ink on map / 52.5 x 63.5 cm



3

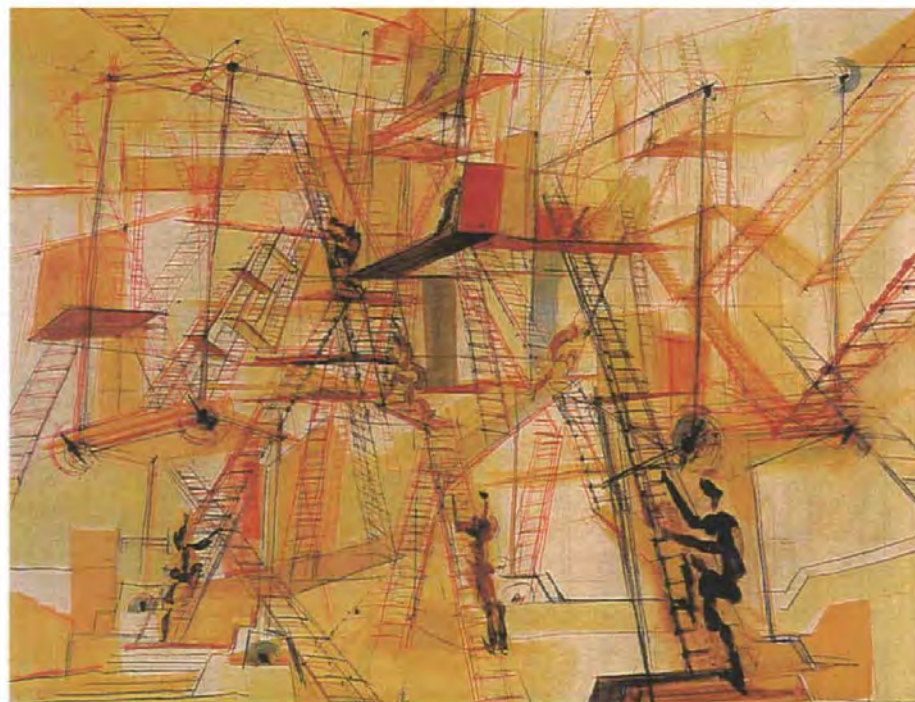
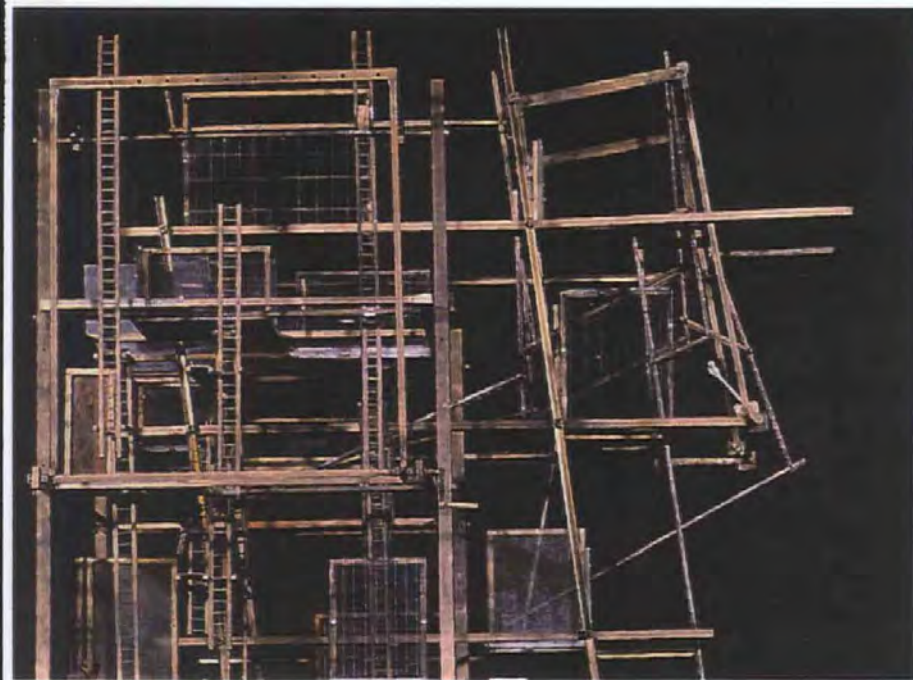


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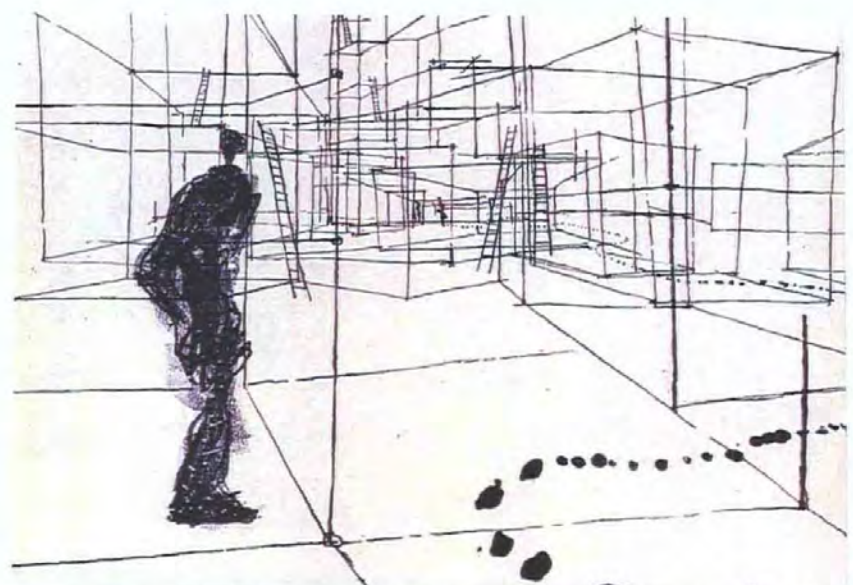
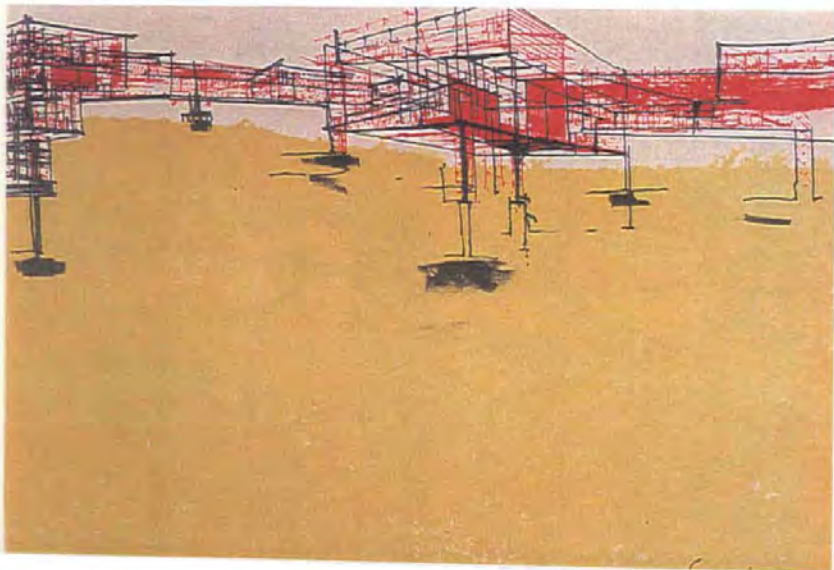
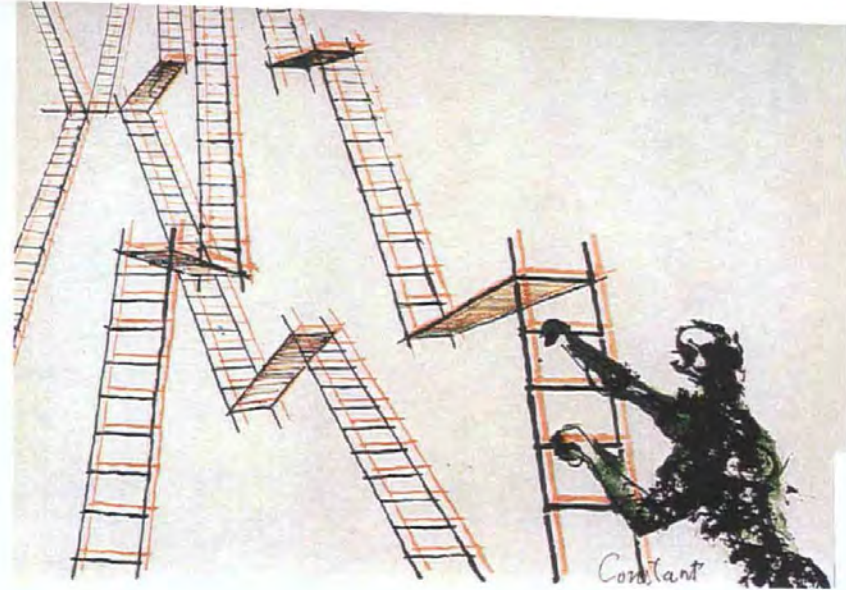
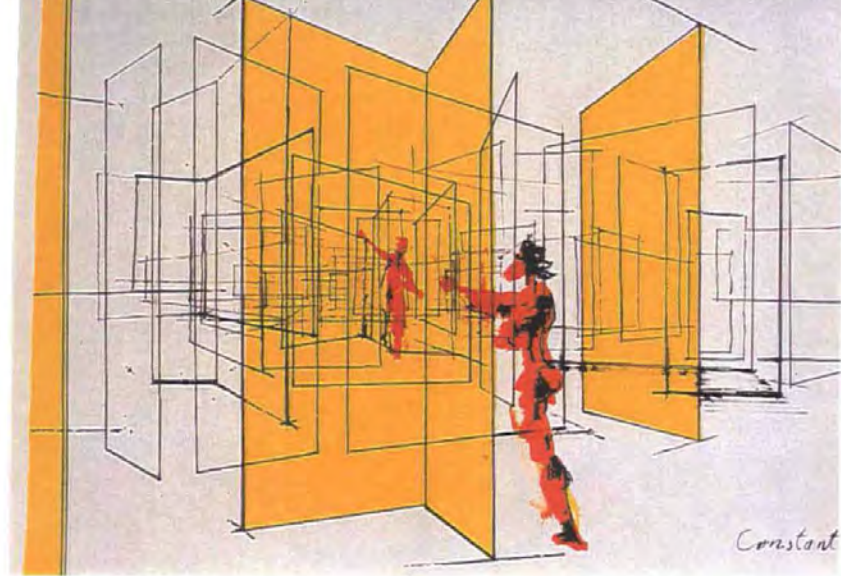


wood / 73 x 96 x 67.5 cm (photos: Victor E.  
Nieuwenhuys)

*Mobiel Ladderlabyrint* (Mobile Ladder  
labyrinth) / pencil and watercolor on paper  
99 x 110 cm







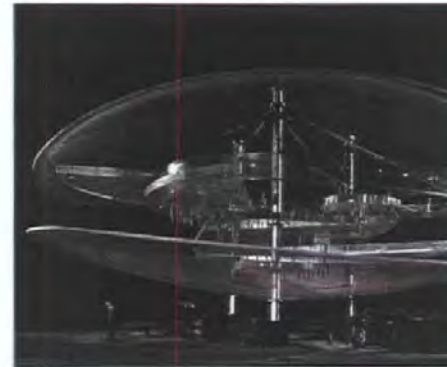
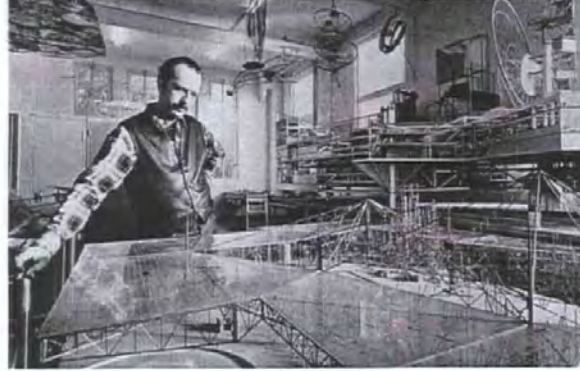


Fig.175 Constant in his studio with part of his 'New Babylon' project, Kattenburg, Amsterdam, c.1966.

Fig.176a Concert hall for electronic music, 1960, metal, plexiglass, wood, 30 x 65 cm; plinth 90 x 65 cm. A model for Constant's city of the future 'New Babylon'.

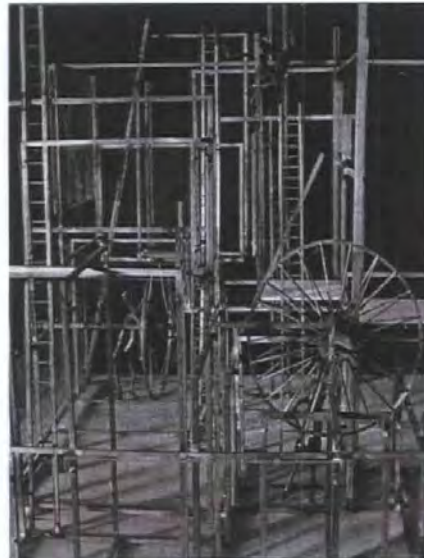


Fig.176b Constant, *Ladder Labyrinth* (Ladderlabyrinth) detail, 1967, design within the framework of this Utopian city of 'New Babylon', brass, plexiglass, wood, 97 x 86 x 76 cm. Wilhelm Lehmbrück Museum, Duisburg, Germany.



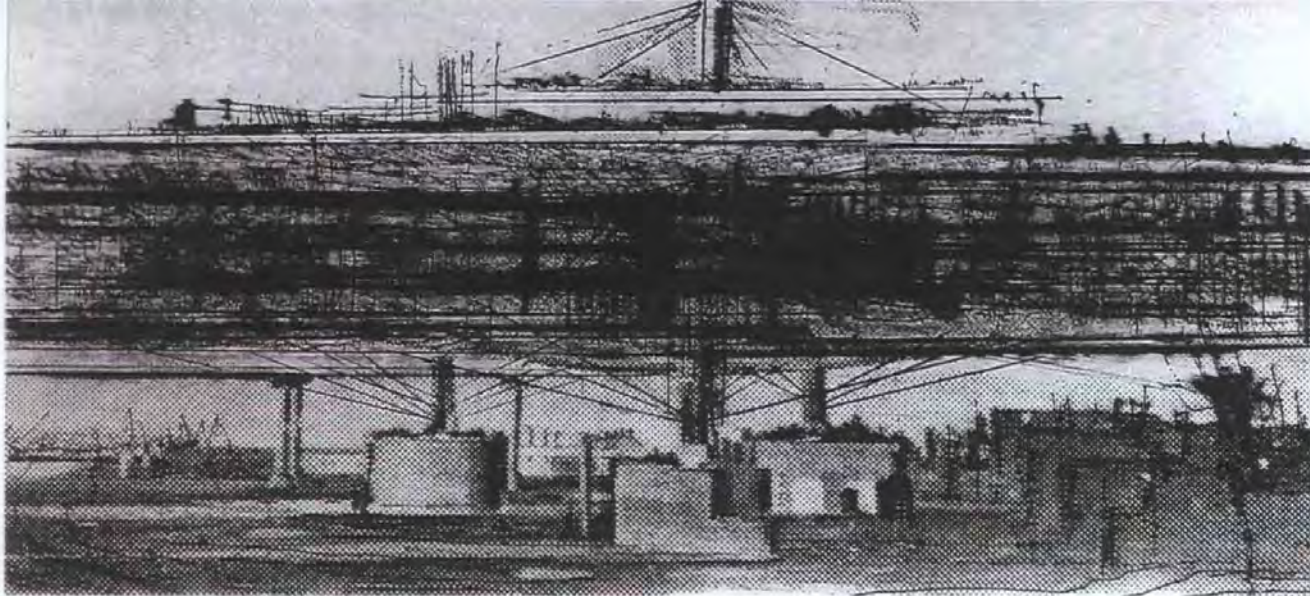


Sectoren rondom een bos (Sectors around a Forest) / watercolor and collage on photograph 99 x 80 cm

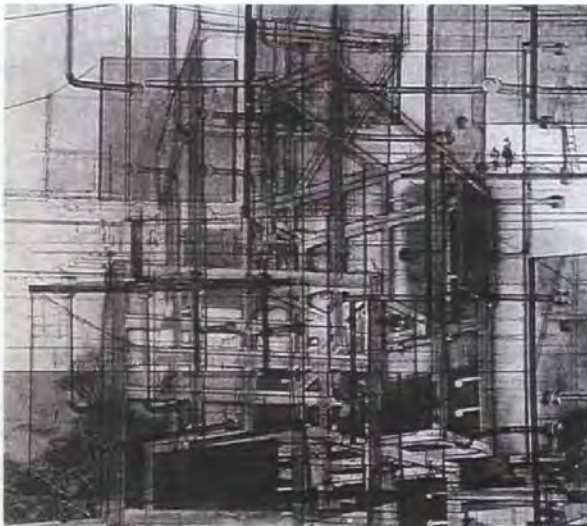
New Babylon op historische kaart van Middlesex (New Babylon on the Historical Map of Middlesex) / watercolor on photograph 81 x 99 cm







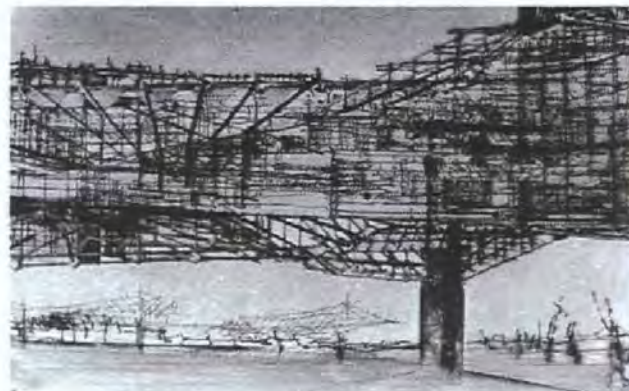
- 1 *Sector* / dry point etching / 5.5 x 12 cm
- 2 *Untitled* / dry point etching / 12 x 13 cm
- 3 *Indian Act, 1970* / etching / 10.8 x 8.9 cm  
collection Centraal Museum, Utrecht
- 4 *Sector* / dry point etching / 6.5 x 10.5 cm
- 5 *Untitled* / dry point etching / 4.5 x 8 cm
- 6 *Joy Riding* / dry point etching / 5 x 15 cm
- 7 *Untitled* / dry point etching / 5 x 14 cm
- 8 *Untitled* / dry point etching / ca. 9 x 8 cm
- 9 *Uitzicht (View)* / dry point etching  
7.9 x 8.8 cm
- 10 *Interieur (Interior)* / etching / 9 x 13 cm  
collection Centraal Museum, Utrecht
- 11 *Torens (Towers)* / dry point etching  
7.2 x 9.7 cm
- 12 *Untitled* / dry point etching / 7.5 x 9 cm



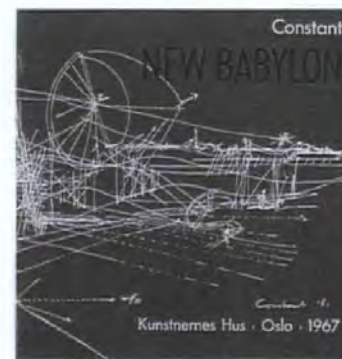
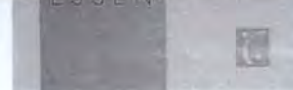
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experimental and unresolved. It was defined by its social and critical claims together with its art-and-architectural status.



<sup>1</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; London and New York: Routledge; p.73. I have added painting because Shields references four books about Literature, though one of them, about Pignon (1956), is an artist.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p.73.

<sup>3</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*; London and New York: Continuum; p.86, and p.182 about painting. Lefebvre, H. (2001), *Contribution de l'aesthetique*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1953], Paris: Anthropos.

<sup>4</sup> See Interview with Ross, K, 'Lefebvre and the Situationists: An Interview' in *October* (1997) no. 97, pps. 69-83. The interview can also be found on the web-site:

<http://www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html>

<sup>5</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.174.

<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre, H, 'Music and Rhythm' in Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis, Space, Time and Everyday Life*, translated by Elden, S, and Gerald Moore; London and New York: Continuum. Beethoven and Schumann are among his favourite composers. He was interested in the challenges to dominant modes of musical theory presented by Boulez, and his antecedents Webern and Schönberg. Triads in music were also important such as melody, harmony, and rhythm, the last of which he thought was neglected in discussions of music. See also p.103 and its note 20 for further book references.

<sup>7</sup> Shields points out that Lefebvre was 'much less influential as a literary theorist.'

<sup>8</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*, translated and edited by E. Kofman and E. Lebas; Oxford, UK and Cambridge Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

<sup>9</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E, 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J. and Sadler, S. (ed.) (2000), *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*; Oxford and Boston: Architectural Press.

<sup>10</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.183. Elden also mentions Lefebvre's own attempts at artwork in some of the journals, his three plays and the possibility of a novel. However Elden describes them as dated, and points out his plays have no named characters and include critiques of Christianity, political farces and satire of the everyday, p.93.

<sup>11</sup> Alechinsky was influenced by Van Lint, and both, Louis van Lint and Jan Cox, also members of Cobra, were influenced by Pignon. Although the Dutch and Danes were moving away from Pignon's style, Pignon was also of some early importance to Corneille and Apple. Finally Bazaine, a contemporary of Pignon, was given a place in one of Cobra's exhibitions.

<sup>12</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction*; London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans Rabinovitch, S, introduction by Wander, P; New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books.

<sup>14</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity: 12 Preludes: September 1959 – May 1961*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1962]; London and New York: Verso.

<sup>15</sup> Soja, E.W. (1994), *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*; London and New York: Verso.

<sup>16</sup> Soja, E.W. (1996), *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Cambridge MA: Blackwells.

<sup>17</sup> See also Soja, E.W. (2000), *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*; Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>18</sup> Soja, E.W. (1994), *Postmodern Geographies*: p.41.

<sup>19</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.58, note 2.

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p.132. It consists of three steps 1. Descriptive observation (informed by experience and general theory). 2. Analytico-retrojective analysis – comparing back to the known origins of other cases. 3. Historico-progressive study of the genesis of such structures, reconstructing the projection of trends to provide an explanatory framework for the present.

<sup>21</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*: p.136.

<sup>22</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.58.

<sup>23</sup> Rogoff, I. (2000), *Terra Infirma: geographies visual culture*; London and New York: Routledge. Deutsche, R. (1998), *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*; Cambridge Massachussettes, London England: MIT Press. Soja, E. (1994) *Postmodern Geographies* and Soja, E. (1996), *Thirdspace*. Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*. Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*. Kofman and Lebas reference a conference and areas of contemporary thought influenced by Lefebvre, p.40. Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*.

<sup>24</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.47/48.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid* p.5: 'His increasing recognition in Anglo-American cultural studies has tended to focus on the production of space, and to a lesser extent urbanism.'

<sup>26</sup> *ibid* p.5.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* p.6.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* p.3.

<sup>29</sup> See Doreen Massey's article about David Harvey and Space-time compression in Bird, J. et. al., (1993), *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*; London: Routledge.

<sup>30</sup> See Deutsche, R. (1998), *Evictions*; especially the chapter 'Men in Space.'

<sup>31</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1974]*, translated by N. Donaldson-Smith, preface by Michael Trebitsch and postscript by David Harvey; Oxford: Blackwell; p.12.

<sup>32</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.7.

<sup>33</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*: p.x.

<sup>34</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1968), *Dialectical Materialism*, translated by John Sturrock; London: Jonathan Cape; p.155.

<sup>35</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.111.

<sup>36</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.x.

<sup>37</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.62.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* p.111, referencing Burkhard, (1986), 'Priests and Jesters: Henri Lefebvre, the 'Philosophies' Gang and French Marxism between the Wars' Phd thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison;' p.265.

<sup>39</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.ix.

<sup>40</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.5

<sup>41</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.170.

<sup>42</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.76 .

<sup>43</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.31.

<sup>44</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.74.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid* p.74.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid* p.59.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p.59.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* p.59.

- <sup>49</sup> ibid p.59 quoted from Lefebvre, H. (1989a), *La Somme et le reste*, Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck. Reprint of first edition 1959; p234.
- <sup>50</sup> ibid p.120. Shields describes it as '...relativised by a transcendent, entirely other, moment; creative, fully lived space.' (In terms of a dialectic Soja (1996) calls it Trialectics and Shields, with important differences, Triplicity, though they both give it a spatial emphasis).
- <sup>51</sup> ibid p.58.
- <sup>52</sup> ibid p.58.
- <sup>53</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; afterward by Harvey, D; p.429.
- <sup>54</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*: p.115.
- <sup>55</sup> ibid p.116.
- <sup>56</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.171.
- <sup>57</sup> ibid p.173.
- <sup>58</sup> ibid p.136 referencing Poster, M. (1975), *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*; Princetown, NJ: Princetown University Press. P.242.
- <sup>59</sup> ibid p.73.
- <sup>60</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*, p.23, quoted from *Espace et Sociétés* 1976-8 vol 4, 270.
- <sup>61</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.100.
- <sup>62</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.xxiii.
- <sup>63</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.100.
- <sup>64</sup> ibid p.100.
- <sup>65</sup> ibid p.100.
- <sup>66</sup> ibid p.100/101 referring to Lefebvre, H. (1980a), *La présence et l'absence*; Paris: Casterman; p.214
- <sup>67</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes, September 1959 – May 1961*; London and New York: Verso, p.142.
- <sup>68</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.84.
- <sup>69</sup> ibid p.84.
- <sup>70</sup> Gardiner, M. (1995), 'Utopia and Everyday life in French Social thought' in *Utopian Studies* (6) 90-123, p.98. Abridged quote also in Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.100.
- <sup>71</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*: p.3.
- <sup>72</sup> ibid p.3
- <sup>73</sup> ibid p.3
- <sup>74</sup> ibid p.4
- <sup>75</sup> ibid p.5
- <sup>76</sup> ibid p.4
- <sup>77</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.p.44.
- <sup>78</sup> ibid p.191.
- <sup>79</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.12.
- <sup>80</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.105.
- <sup>81</sup> ibid p.137.
- <sup>82</sup> ibid p.137
- <sup>83</sup> ibid p.137
- <sup>84</sup> ibid p.137.
- <sup>85</sup> ibid p.159/160.

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- <sup>86</sup> *ibid* p.137.
- <sup>87</sup> See Shields (1999) for the different provenances of Lefebvre's thought: chapter 6 about Marx and Nietzsche, Chapter 5 about Dada and Surrealism. For Bataille, p.25.
- <sup>88</sup> *ibid* p.53.
- <sup>89</sup> *ibid* p.53.
- <sup>90</sup> *ibid* p.57.
- <sup>91</sup> *ibid* p.57.
- <sup>92</sup> *ibid* p.30. Philosophies was based around a group of philosophers and novelists post First World War, Lefebvre among them. See Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.11-19, and p.30-34.
- <sup>93</sup> *ibid* p.30, Shields referencing: Marcus, G. (1989), *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*; Cambridge Massachusetts, USA: Harvard.
- <sup>94</sup> *ibid* p.55.
- <sup>95</sup> *ibid* p.54.
- <sup>96</sup> *ibid* p.105.
- <sup>97</sup> *ibid* p.57.
- <sup>98</sup> *ibid* p.55.
- <sup>99</sup> *ibid* p.56.
- <sup>100</sup> *ibid* p.57.
- <sup>101</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p30.
- <sup>102</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.25. Benjamin had read La conscience mystifiée and was a refugee in Paris in the late 20s until the early 40s and like Lefebvre travelled to Marseille when Paris was invaded. However there is no reference of a meeting, merely that 'he must have been aware of Lefebvre.'
- <sup>103</sup> *ibid* p.57.
- <sup>104</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*: p.105, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Art négro, the exotic, (through music, Rites of Spring, Scheherazade for example).
- <sup>105</sup> *ibid* p.104.
- <sup>106</sup> *ibid* p.106.
- <sup>107</sup> *ibid* p.109.
- <sup>108</sup> *ibid* p.106/107.
- <sup>109</sup> *ibid* p.107.
- <sup>110</sup> *ibid* p.108.
- <sup>111</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.56 referring to P. Latour, P. and Combes, F. (eds) (1991), *Conversation avec Henri Lefebvre*; Paris: Messidor, Collection Libres propos, p.37.
- <sup>112</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*: p.4.
- <sup>113</sup> *ibid* p.269.
- <sup>114</sup> *ibid* p.269/270.
- <sup>115</sup> *ibid* p.271.
- <sup>116</sup> *ibid* p.272.
- <sup>117</sup> *ibid* p.272, Lefebvre suggests social realism is just one colour in the spectrum of art, but equally it runs the risk of changing its partial interpretation of art into a total interpretation.
- <sup>118</sup> *ibid* p.323 and 363 respectively.
- <sup>119</sup> *ibid* p.320.

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid* p.320/321.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid* p.320/321.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid* p.321.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid* p.320.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid* p.321.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid* p.326.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid* p.321.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid* p.353, paraphrasing top paragraph.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid* p.357.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid* p.355.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid* p.270.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid* p.270.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid* p.109.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid* p.110.

<sup>134</sup> Debord wrote a brief letter to Lefebvre in response to Lefebvre's article about Revolutionary Romanticism. Lefebvre responds that he is not trying to say that he wants to be rid of the world of expression. see <http://www.notbored.org/debord-5May1960.html> or published in Guy Debord, *Correspondance*, Volume 2, 1960-1964.

<sup>135</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*: p.355. Or p.349 in the simplified terms of the conversation 'In effect I do believe that art will die.'

<sup>136</sup> *ibid* p.362.

### **The Everyday**

<sup>137</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.72.

<sup>138</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.7.

<sup>139</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1992], translated by S. Elden and G. Moore; London and New York: Continuum. Or Lefebvre, H. (with Catherine Régulier-Lefebvre) (1992) *Eléments de rythmanalyse: Introduction à la connaissance des rythmes*, preface by René Lorau. Paris: Editions Syllepse, Collections Explorations et découvertes.

<sup>140</sup> Shields points out that Lefebvre's work is much more widely read and translated in Europe. Only a small portion of his work has been translated into English. Shields' bibliography lists over 15 pages of Lefebvre's works, articles etc.

<sup>141</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.118.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid* p.113.

<sup>143</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.118.

<sup>144</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.2. Shields points out Marx had identified three forms of alienation, which is most easily understood as estrangement; from work and activities; from each other; from their own essence their species-being. These are compressed into one by Lefebvre - He amplifies its importance but loses some of its nuances that need to be rediscovered. Although Lefebvre later gives alienation the plural alienations, but doesn't deepen its terms, p.40.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid* p.68.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid* p.66.

<sup>147</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.110.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid* p.115.

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- <sup>149</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*, p.8.
- <sup>150</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.115
- <sup>151</sup> ibid p.18.
- <sup>152</sup> ibid p.18.
- <sup>153</sup> ibid p.118.
- <sup>154</sup> ibid pages 90-93. And Lefebvre, H. (1955), *Rabelais*; Paris: Anthropos, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2001.
- <sup>155</sup> ibid p.122.
- <sup>156</sup> ibid p.118.
- <sup>157</sup> ibid p.123. Referring to Bakhtin, M. (1984), *Rabelais and his World*; Bloomington , Indiana University Press. And Bataille, G. (1991), *The Accursed Share: Vol. 1*, translated by Hurley, R: New York: Zone Books. See also Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; about Bakhtin and Bataille. Shields mentions the relevance of Bataille to Lefebvre on p.3 and p.25.
- <sup>158</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.61. Quoting Marcus, G. (1989) *Lipstick Traces*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard; p.144.
- <sup>159</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.172.
- <sup>160</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*, edited by Elden, S. Lebas, E. and Kofman, E; New York and London: Continuum; pps.166-170.
- <sup>161</sup> ibid p.166.
- <sup>162</sup> ibid p.166.
- <sup>163</sup> ibid p.172.
- <sup>164</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life – Volume 1: Introduction*, [1st pub. 1947], translated by J. Moore; London: Verso. p.24/25.
- <sup>165</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.100 quoting Lefebvre, H. (1980a), *La présence and l'absence*; Paris: Custerman (not translated in english); p.214.
- <sup>166</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.115.
- <sup>167</sup> ibid p.117.
- <sup>168</sup> ibid p.119, quoted from Lefebvre, H. (1984) *Everyday Life in the Modern World* [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1968], trans by Sacha Rabinovitch; New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- <sup>169</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.66. See Elden, S. (2004) about Heidegger and the everyday. Elden says it was more likely through Heidegger than Lukacs that the everyday made its way into Lefebvre's work, p.112.
- <sup>170</sup> See Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; for example p.112.
- <sup>171</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*, p.91.
- <sup>172</sup> ibid p.91.
- <sup>173</sup> ibid p.88.
- <sup>174</sup> ibid p.89.
- <sup>175</sup> ibid p.91.
- <sup>176</sup> ibid p.131.
- <sup>177</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.116.
- <sup>178</sup> ibid p.117.
- <sup>179</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.132/133.
- <sup>180</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.57.
- <sup>181</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.71.

- <sup>182</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.114. As Trebitsch has described it, Volume II, *The Critique of Everyday life* functions as 'a veritable "discourse on method" in sociology.
- <sup>183</sup> *ibid* p.131.
- <sup>184</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.116.
- <sup>185</sup> *ibid* p.116.
- <sup>186</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.113, forward to the second edition, p.94.
- <sup>187</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life – Volume I: Introduction*, [1st pub. 1947], translated by J. Moore; London: Verso; p.6 in the forward.
- <sup>188</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.116/117.
- <sup>189</sup> *ibid* p.125. Highmore discusses the erasure of difference that privileges the heterosexual masculine referring critically to the works of Langbauer, L. (1992) 'Cultural Studies and the Politics of the Everyday' *Diacritics*, 22.1: pps. 47-65. Shields (1999) about Lefebvre and the experience of women pps.96-97.
- <sup>190</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.112-113 for example develops the case for the influence of Heidegger on Lefebvre's thinking.
- <sup>191</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), referring to Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life - Volume I: Introduction*, [1st pub. 1947], translated by J. Moore, preface by Trebitsch; London: Verso; p.xvii-xix.
- Trebitsch 1991, p.xvii-xix, preface to Lefebvre's critique of everyday life
- <sup>192</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.79 quoting Lefebvre.
- <sup>193</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.118, referring to Jay, M. (1984), *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a concept from Lukács to Habermas*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- <sup>194</sup> *ibid* p.117.
- <sup>195</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.113.
- <sup>196</sup> See for example Highmore, B. (2002), p.117, about Foucault and Barthes.
- <sup>197</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.113
- <sup>198</sup> *ibid* p.113. (From Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, p.166.)
- <sup>199</sup> *ibid* p.113.
- <sup>200</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life*; p.66.
- <sup>201</sup> *ibid* p.67.
- <sup>202</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.71.
- <sup>203</sup> *ibid* p.71. 'This Marxist appropriation of Nietzsche's 'Overman' is conceived as the unity of the socially formed individual and the person as 'natural' body.'
- <sup>204</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.127.
- <sup>205</sup> *ibid* p.127.
- <sup>206</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.73.
- <sup>207</sup> Ross, K. (1996), *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Re-ordering of French Culture*; Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, An October Book. All quotes from this paragraph p.158-163. Ross quotes Foucault 'Man would be erased, like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea.' p.162.
- <sup>208</sup> See for example article by Jorn, A, 'Architecture for Life' on Situationist international online. The Pre-situationist archive is at <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/forlife.html> (*Potlatch* #15 (22 December 1954)) or see also Jorn, A, 'Notes on the Formation of the



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Imaginist Bauhaus.' For the Lettrist archive see:

<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/presitu/li.html>. See also Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*: pps.14-15, for the build up to the IMIB and the Lettrists founding of the Situationists in July 1957.

<sup>209</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.116 and p.153. Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; pps.89-92. Marcus, G. (1989), *Lipstick Traces*, also mentions Lefebvre and the Situationists. See Ross, K. (1997), 'Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview'. *October*, 79: pp69-83. See pps.78/79 for a brief account of the split by Lefebvre.

<sup>210</sup> About Gallizio and his aesthetic, see Bandini, M., 'Surrealist References in the notion of *dérive* and psychogeography of the situationist urban environment' in Andreotti, L. and Costa, X. (1996), *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism*; Barcelona: Museu d'art Contemporani de Barcelona; pps49-51. Gallizio, like Jorn, was also an avid reader of Bachelard, p.50.

<sup>211</sup> See Sadler, S. (1998), *The Situationist City*; Cambridge Massachusettes and London England: MIT Press, for an account of the early Situationists.

<sup>212</sup> Ross, K. (1996), *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*; p.8

<sup>213</sup> Bandini, M., 'Surrealist references in the notions of *dérive* and psychogeography of the situationist urban environment' in Andreotti, L. and Costa, X. (1996) *Situationists*; p.48.

<sup>214</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.103. See for e.g. a sociology conference held by Lefebvre 17/05/61 that Debord contributed to by sending a cassette: *Internationale Situationniste* #6 (August 1962 or <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/everyday.html> or). Debord's essay is called 'Perspectives For Conscious Changes in Everyday Life.'

<sup>215</sup> Sadler, S. (1998), *The Situationist City*; p.44

<sup>216</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.138.

<sup>217</sup> *ibid* p.142.

<sup>218</sup> P.76, Ross, K. (1997), 'Lefebvre on the Situationists;' p.76.

<sup>219</sup> 'For all their radicalism the Situationists maintain a strangely limited view of art...' Conversely some writing by Debord, about Jorn's garden for example, led the same author to conclude '...it is in the works of the imagination, as manifest in Jorn's 'Fantastical Garden' and Debord's 'Underground retreat', that the Situationists find a home.' From Gillman, C. 'Asger Jorn's Avant-Garde Archives' *October* 79: Winter 1997: p.33-48.

<sup>220</sup> Wigley, M (1998) *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire*, Witte de With, Centre for contemporary art / 010 publishers, Rotterdam; p.33.

<sup>221</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.104. The Situationist theory is compared with Lefebvre's in *Situationniste Internationale* 4 (June 1960:10-11) or <http://www.notbored.org/moments.html>. See also Sadler, S. (1998), *The Situationist City*;p.45 for comparison of Situationist's 'situation' and Lefebvre's 'moment.'

<sup>222</sup> *ibid* p.103.

<sup>223</sup> Highmore for example mentions Benjamin and Surrealism. See 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia,' in Highmore, B. (2002) *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.140, that focused on the outmoded spaces of the city.

<sup>224</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J. and Sadler, S. (ed.) (2000), *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*; Oxford and Boston: Architectural Press; p.83. See also for example Bandini, M., 'Surrealist references in the notions of *dérive* and

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psychogeography of the situationist urban environment', in Andreotti, L. and Costa, X. (1996), *Situationists*.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid* p.83-84.

<sup>226</sup> Ross, K. (1997), 'Lefebvre on the Situationists'; p.80-81.

<sup>227</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.141.

<sup>228</sup> Sadler, S. (1998), *The Situationist City*; p.20.

<sup>229</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.18-19. Debord, G and Jorn, A.(1959), *Mémoires*; Copenhagen: Permild and Reosengreen.

<sup>230</sup> Highmore, B. (2002), *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory*; p.142. About specific situations Highmore mentions the relevance of the war of Algerian independence in 1954.

### **Lived Time**

<sup>231</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.112.

<sup>232</sup> *ibid* p.117. Aztec, Inca, Greek and Roman are examples he gives.

<sup>233</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.2.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid* p.63.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid* p.3.

<sup>236</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.68.

<sup>237</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.102.

<sup>238</sup> *ibid* p.94.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid* p.63

<sup>240</sup> *ibid* p.94.

<sup>241</sup> *ibid* p.63/64

<sup>242</sup> *ibid* p.61.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid* p.63

<sup>244</sup> *ibid* p.73.

<sup>245</sup> See Buck-Morss, S. (1991), *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Massachusetts and London, MIT Press.

<sup>246</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.66. In terms of thinking about history Shields indicates 'Lefebvre's method is a significant contribution to the tool kit of critical theory,' in Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.132.133. It relates the present to the past (description), the past to itself (analytico-regressive) and then the past back to the present (historico-progressive).

<sup>247</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.27.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid* p.27.

<sup>249</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.43.

<sup>250</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.176. Lefebvre's *La fin de l'histoire*, Paris: Anthropos 2001 (1970)

<sup>251</sup> *ibid* p.176 from Lefebvre, H. *La fin de L'histoire* p.18.

<sup>252</sup> *ibid* p.175.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid* p.176.

<sup>254</sup> *ibid* p.176.

<sup>255</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.101.

<sup>256</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.376.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid* p.376.

<sup>258</sup> *ibid* p.376.

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- <sup>259</sup> *ibid* p.376.  
<sup>260</sup> *ibid* p.376.  
<sup>261</sup> *ibid* p.377.  
<sup>262</sup> *ibid* p.377.  
<sup>263</sup> *ibid* p.373. He says about the significance of power 'It is irrelevant that the state may have been historically determined and necessary.'  
<sup>264</sup> *ibid* p.373.  
<sup>265</sup> *ibid* p.374.  
<sup>266</sup> *ibid* p.373.  
<sup>267</sup> *ibid* p.373.  
<sup>268</sup> *ibid* p.358.  
<sup>269</sup> *ibid* p.373.  
<sup>270</sup> *ibid* p.329.  
<sup>271</sup> *ibid* p.329.  
<sup>272</sup> *ibid* p.329.  
<sup>273</sup> *ibid* p.329.  
<sup>274</sup> *ibid* p.329.  
<sup>275</sup> *ibid* p.329.  
<sup>276</sup> *ibid* p.328.  
<sup>277</sup> *ibid* p.328.  
<sup>278</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life*; p.xxiii.  
<sup>279</sup> *ibid* see pages 164-168 for differences of appropriated and dominated space.  
<sup>280</sup> *ibid* p.166.  
<sup>281</sup> 'Time and History' in Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*.  
<sup>282</sup> *ibid*, p.177.  
<sup>283</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.59.  
<sup>284</sup> *ibid* p.59 footnote.  
<sup>285</sup> *ibid* p.60.  
<sup>286</sup> *ibid* p.63.  
<sup>287</sup> *ibid* p.101.  
<sup>288</sup> *ibid* p.104.  
<sup>289</sup> *ibid* p.59.  
<sup>290</sup> *ibid* p.60.  
<sup>291</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life*; p.67.  
<sup>292</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.60.  
<sup>293</sup> *ibid* p.61. Lebas, E and Kofman, E. in Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings On Cities*; p.11, also acknowledge that Benjamin had read Lefebvre, and reference Andersen, P. (1976), *On the Tracks of Western Marxism*,; New Left Books; p.37  
<sup>294</sup> *ibid* p.61.  
<sup>295</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.172.  
<sup>296</sup> *ibid* p.173, from Lefebvre, H. (1989), *La Somme et le reste*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1959], Meridiens-Klinksieck; p.653.  
<sup>297</sup> *ibid* p.173.  
<sup>298</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.129.  
<sup>299</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.175.  
<sup>300</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.128

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- <sup>301</sup> ibid p.129.
- <sup>302</sup> ibid p.129.
- <sup>303</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.18.
- <sup>304</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.114 for a list of some references to moments in Lefebvre's texts.
- <sup>305</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.95.
- <sup>306</sup> ibid p.95.
- <sup>307</sup> ibid p.96.
- <sup>308</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.25.
- <sup>309</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life*; p.230.
- <sup>310</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.95.
- <sup>311</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.18, Lebas and Kofman quoting Lefebvre, H. (1989), *Le Somme et le reste*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1959], Meridiens-Klinksieck.
- <sup>312</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991a), *Critique of Everyday Life*; p.249.
- <sup>313</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.117.
- <sup>314</sup> ibid p.110.
- <sup>315</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.73.
- <sup>316</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.130.
- <sup>317</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.72, 'Lefebvre at first criticised Nietzsche for falling back from Marx's and Hegel's dialectical philosophy but finally accepted the importance of reversibility and instability in everyday life.'
- <sup>318</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.5.
- <sup>319</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.172.
- <sup>320</sup> ibid p.172.
- <sup>321</sup> ibid p.175 from Lefebvre, H. (1989), *La Somme et le Reste*; p.381-2.
- <sup>322</sup> ibid p.175.
- <sup>323</sup> ibid p.175.
- <sup>324</sup> ibid p.173.
- <sup>325</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.28, note 15.
- <sup>326</sup> ibid p.28/29
- <sup>327</sup> ibid p.29. Bachelard borrowed the term from a Brazilian philosopher, Pinheiro dos Santos. See Bachelard, G. (2000), *Dialectic of Duration*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1950], translated by Mary McAllester Jones, Introduction by Cristina Chimisso; Clinamen Press. In the introduction Chimisso says Rhythmanalysis for Bachelard is analogous to the rhythm of intellectual knowledge, that is to say to its dialectic process. In repose the imagination can express itself, though continuity is just not creative. Bachelard argues poetic rhythm was achieved by Surrealism, an avant-garde movement he greatly admired. 'He (Bachelard) argues that "In 'Surrationalism', an article published the same year as *The Dialectic of Duration*, Bachelard compares the rhythm of Surrealist poetry with the rhythm he proposes for rational knowledge. He suggests that the dialectic between rational plot and dream devised by Tristan Tzara for poetry would represent a model for rational knowledge, so that rationalism, would turn into 'surrationalism,'" p.10/11.
- <sup>328</sup> ibid p.28/29 and note 16.
- <sup>329</sup> ibid p.29.
- <sup>330</sup> ibid p.17.
- <sup>331</sup> ibid p.7.

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- <sup>332</sup> *ibid* p.13.
- <sup>333</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*; p.129. Elden, S. (2003), cites Heidegger as a key source for Lefebvre's thinking.
- <sup>334</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.116.
- <sup>335</sup> *ibid* p.117.
- <sup>336</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.18.
- <sup>337</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.118.
- <sup>338</sup> Chapter 9 in Bachelard, G. (1994), *The Poetics of Space*, translated from the French by Maria Jolas, with a new forward by R.Stilgoe; Boston: Beacon Press.
- <sup>339</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.32.
- <sup>340</sup> *ibid* p.31.
- <sup>341</sup> *ibid* p.32.
- <sup>342</sup> *ibid* p.31.
- <sup>343</sup> *ibid* p.31.
- <sup>344</sup> Lefebvre, H. 'The Rhythmanalytical Project' in Lefebvre, H (2004) *Rhythmanalysis, Space, Time and Everyday Life*; p.80 and p.81. And 'The Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities' in Lefebvre, H (2004) *Rhythmanalysis, Space, Time and Everyday Life*; p.89.
- <sup>345</sup> *ibid* p.81.
- <sup>346</sup> *ibid* p.88
- <sup>347</sup> *ibid* p.88.
- <sup>348</sup> *ibid* p.88
- <sup>349</sup> *ibid* p.19 in 'The Rhythmanalyst: A Previsionary Portrait'.
- <sup>350</sup> *ibid* p.97.
- <sup>351</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.122.
- <sup>352</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis, Space, Time and Everyday Life*; one of his references to muslim cities, p.95.
- <sup>353</sup> *ibid* p.95.
- <sup>354</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.xvi.
- <sup>355</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. (2000), 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J. and Sadler, S. (ed.) (2000), *Non-plan*; p.80.
- <sup>356</sup> For an account of these transitions see Ross, K (1996), *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*.
- <sup>357</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writing On Cities*; p.22 quoting Latour, P. and Combes, F. (1991), *Conversation avec Henri Lefebvre*; Paris: Messidor.
- <sup>358</sup> See Bird, J et al (1993), especially part V 'Thinking Futures.'
- <sup>359</sup> *ibid* p.265.
- <sup>360</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.30.
- <sup>361</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.ix/x.
- <sup>362</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.13.
- <sup>363</sup> p.90, Gardiner, M. 'Utopia and Everyday Life in French Social Thought' in *Utopian Studies* 1995, 6, (2), pps.123-145.
- <sup>364</sup> See for example Harris, S. and Berke, D. (eds.) (1997), *Architecture of the Everyday*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press or Miles, M. (2000), *The Uses of Decoration, Essays in the architectural everyday*. Chichester, New York, Weinheim, Brisbane, Singapore, Toronto: John Wiley and Sons.
- <sup>365</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.22. Kofman, in the introduction, is paraphrasing Lowy, M. (1991), *Le marxisme romantique*, M Mensuel, marxisme, mouvement, 50, 1991, pps.6-8.

- <sup>366</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.15. 'An experimental utopia is the exploration of what is humanly possible based upon the image and the imaginary (imaginaire), constantly subjected to critique and referring to a problematic derived from the real, that is a feedback mechanism.'
- <sup>367</sup> In terms of Lefebvre's first writing specifically about urbanism, Lebas, E and Kofman, E. (2000) refer to Lefebvre, H, 'Lefebvre Utopie expérimentale: pour un nouvel urbanisme', *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 11, no 3, 1961, pps.191-198.
- <sup>368</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.183.
- <sup>369</sup> *ibid* p.183.
- <sup>370</sup> *ibid* p.73.
- <sup>371</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writing on Cities*; p.21.
- <sup>372</sup> *ibid* p.89.
- <sup>373</sup> *ibid* p.27.
- <sup>374</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*; p.66 from an essay called 'Becoming and the Historical' from Lefebvre, H, (1986), *Le Retour de La Dialectique. 12 mots clés*, Messidor, Éditions Sociales.
- <sup>375</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.101.
- <sup>376</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.243.
- <sup>377</sup> Bird, J. et. al., (1993), *Mapping the Futures*; p.258.
- <sup>378</sup> Shields, R. (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; p.100.
- <sup>379</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writing on Cities*; p.12. Lebas and Kofman referencing Lefebvre, H.(1966), *La Langage et la Société*, Gallimard; pps.328-31.
- <sup>380</sup> *ibid* p.15.
- <sup>381</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.243 quoting Lefebvre.
- <sup>382</sup> *ibid* p.226.
- <sup>383</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.33.
- <sup>384</sup> *ibid* p.33. Referring to Lefebvre, H. (1986), *La Retour de la Dialectique*; p.173.
- <sup>385</sup> *ibid* pps. 33/34.
- <sup>386</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.230.
- <sup>387</sup> *ibid* p.230.
- <sup>388</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1984), *Everyday Life in the Modern World*; p.xvi.
- <sup>389</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. (2000), 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J. and Sadler, S. (ed.) (2000), *Non-plan*; p.86.
- <sup>390</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*; p.33.
- <sup>391</sup> *ibid* p.33.
- <sup>392</sup> *ibid* p.32.
- <sup>393</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.357.
- <sup>394</sup> *ibid* p.357.
- <sup>395</sup> *ibid* p.377.
- <sup>396</sup> *ibid* p.378.
- <sup>397</sup> *ibid* p.379. The quote is from Paul Klee's little book, (1974), *On Modern Art*, with an introduction by Herbert Read; London: Faber and Faber.
- <sup>398</sup> *ibid* p.379.
- <sup>399</sup> *ibid* p.381.
- <sup>400</sup> *ibid* p.384.
- <sup>401</sup> *ibid* p.385.

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<sup>402</sup> *ibid* p.386.

<sup>403</sup> *ibid* p.386.

<sup>404</sup> *ibid* p.387. 'The supreme *impossible possibility*, the foundation of tragedy is death or nothingness. The supreme *possible impossibility*, the basis of nihilism, is the absolute, the sacred, transcendence, being, beauty, alas, and everything which died.'

### **Architecture and the Future**

<sup>405</sup> See Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.65, footnote. The others were works by Nietzsche, Adorno, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, Musil and Axelos. The links between Constant and Lefebvre are researched by Kofman, E and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J. and Sadler, S. (ed.) (2000), *Non-plan*; pps.80-89.

<sup>406</sup> Interview by Ross, K 'Lefebvre and the Situationists: An interview' in *October*, Winter 1997, pp69-83. Also accessible on web-site: <http://www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html>

<sup>407</sup> *ibid* p.70.

<sup>408</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (eds.) (2000), *'Non-Plan'*; p.80.

<sup>409</sup> *ibid* p.80.

<sup>410</sup> *ibid* p.80.

<sup>411</sup> *ibid* p.80.

<sup>412</sup> Ross, K 'Lefebvre and the Situationists'; p.71.

<sup>413</sup> *ibid* p.77.

<sup>414</sup> Birtwhistle, G, 'Behind the Primitivism of Cobra' in Shield, P and Birtwhistle, G. et al, (2003), *Cobra*; p.25

<sup>415</sup> *ibid* p.25.

<sup>416</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (eds.) (2000), *'Non-Plan'*; p.88.

<sup>417</sup> *ibid* p.88.

<sup>418</sup> *ibid* p.89. (See also Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; pps.79-231).

<sup>419</sup> *ibid* p.88.

<sup>420</sup> *ibid* p.88.

<sup>421</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.36-38 about Constant's expulsion.

<sup>422</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (eds.) (2000), *'Non-Plan'*; p.84. See Wigley, M. (1998) *Constant's New Babylon*; pps. 80-81 for images of Gypsy camp.

<sup>423</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.25

<sup>424</sup> *ibid* p.26, Constant's published article for Forum (1955), 'From Collaboration to Absolute Unity Among the Plastic Arts' in Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.75.

<sup>425</sup> See Ross, K 'Lefebvre and the Situationists': p.72. As Lebas and Kofman point out in their article about Constant, Lefebvre refers to a text by Constant 'Pour une architecture de Situation', though they are unable to find it. They think he may be referring to a text Constant co-wrote with Aldo van Eyck entitled 'Towards a Spatial Colourism' published in Wigley (1998).

<sup>426</sup> It was through Van Eyck that Constant first met Jorn in Paris. See Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.20-21 for Constant and Van Eyck. See *ibid* p.74 for 'Spatial Colorism' text. It was published together with texts by Aldo van Eyck, accompanied by three silkscreens in an edition of 50, at an exhibition 'Voor een Spatiaal Colorisme' at Stedelijk



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Museum, Amsterdam, in 1952. It was Van Eyck who 'designed' the lay-out of the Cobra exhibition at Amsterdam.

<sup>427</sup> Ross, K 'Lefebvre and the Situationists': p.70/71. Lefebvre refers to an 'unknown' Constant text of 1953 'For an architecture of Situation.' Kofman and Lebas suggest it might be the 'Spatial Colourism' text. However Lefebvre's dating of the 1953 text may also be wrong given he dates New Babylon to 1950. Constant's 1953 text is not as obviously comparable as other texts might be.

<sup>428</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon* p.22.

<sup>429</sup> *ibid* p.28.

<sup>430</sup> *ibid* p.29.

<sup>431</sup> 'The Principle of Disorientation' in Andreotti, L. and Costa, X (1996), *Situationists*; p.87.

<sup>432</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.29, from Debord, G 'Report on the Construction of Situations,' in Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology*, p.23.

<sup>433</sup> *ibid* p.29.

<sup>434</sup> *ibid* p.29.

<sup>435</sup> *ibid* p.29 note 70.

<sup>436</sup> *ibid* p.14.

<sup>437</sup> *ibid* p.87 for a reprint of the Declaration.

<sup>438</sup> *ibid* p.131. See also Constant's 'New Urbanism' text, 1966, p.168.

<sup>439</sup> *ibid* p.132.

<sup>440</sup> *ibid* p.132, referring to Huizinga, J. (1970), *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1938]; New York: Harper and Row.

<sup>441</sup> *ibid* p.132.

<sup>442</sup> *ibid* p.160.

<sup>443</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (eds.) (2000), *'Non-Plan'*; p.85.

<sup>444</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.39.

<sup>445</sup> Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (eds.) (2000), *'Non-Plan'*; p.88.

<sup>446</sup> *ibid* p.88.

<sup>447</sup> *ibid* p.88.

<sup>448</sup> *ibid* p.89, 'there is no equivalence between Constant and Lefebvre, yet their works are held by a whole...'

<sup>449</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.17, quoting Andreotti, L. and Costa, X. (1996), *Theory of Dérive and other Situationist Writing on the City*; Barcelona: Macba and Actar, pages 68-71.

<sup>450</sup> *ibid* p.27 for differences. See also Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (eds.) (2000), *'Non-Plan'*; p.85. See Shield, P, (1998), 'Comparative Vandalism Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life,' Ashgate. For Jorn, pataphysics and humour; p.8.

<sup>451</sup> Shield, P, (1998), *Comparative Vandalism*; p.7

<sup>452</sup> See *ibid* or Henriksen, N, (2003) 'Asger Jorn and the Photographic Essay on Scandinavian Vandalism,' Article 5, *Inferno*, Vol. VIII. The article is also at [http://eprints.st-andrews.ac.uk/arc ... 0369/01/11\\_-\\_Article\\_5\\_-\\_%5B8%5D.pdf](http://eprints.st-andrews.ac.uk/arc ... 0369/01/11_-_Article_5_-_%5B8%5D.pdf). Or more simply type in Jorn and Scandinavian Vandalism.

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<sup>453</sup> Birtwhistle, Graham (1986) *Living Art: Asger Jorn's comprehensive theory of art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946-1949)*, Reflex, Utrecht; p.41. Birtwhistle says about Jorn 'certain of his perspectives and themes invite comparison with those of men like Wilhelm Reich, Satre, and Henri Lefebvre'

<sup>454</sup> Troels Andersen, from the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark, in an email, said he was unaware of any personal meeting between Jorn and Lefebvre. But he says Jorn certainly knew some of his writings and that he thinks there may be some references to Lefebvre in some of Jorn's articles, or unpublished writing. I also found a couple of copies of works by Lefebvre in Jorn's library.

<sup>455</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.62.

<sup>456</sup> *ibid* p.18, and for maps, pps117, 150-152-153, 203.

<sup>457</sup> *ibid* p.67

<sup>458</sup> See Lambert, J-C, 'Constant and the Labyrinth' in Andreotti, L. and Costs, X. (1996), *Situationists*. For a diversity of other works that consider the labyrinth, or *chora*, in an architectural context see, for example, Derrida, J. and Eisenmann, P. (1997), *Chora L. Works*, edited by Kipnis, J. and Leaser, T; New York: Monacelli Press. In an anthropological and architectural context see McEwen, I, K. (1993), *Socrates' Ancestor. Essay on Architectural Beginnings*; Massachusettes: MIT Press. Or about Gender and Chora, see Rendell, J. et. al. (eds.) (2000), *Gender, Space, and Architecture: An interdisciplinary introduction*; London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>459</sup> Wigley, M. (1998), *Constant's New Babylon*; p.27.

<sup>460</sup> *ibid* p.61 about a drawing that 'lies between architecture and painting.' Constant's early architectural work is however marked by an absence of graphic work. Wigley describes them as a representation of architectural drawings 'Like the models, they are more beautiful than they need to be to communicate the organization of the building; more beautiful than anything a practical architect would usually make' (p.60). He says each of the maps of New Babylon echoed the maps of Jorn and Debord. And in 1967 he made a collage of diverse city centres over an ancient historical map (p.61). He produced a series of ten lithographs exhibited in 1963 and produced a limited edition of 60 boxed sets.

<sup>461</sup> *ibid* p.62.

## **Volume Three**

# **Burkin, Lefebvre and Psychoanalysis. A critical differentiation and reconsideration of the lived and its mis- alignments**

- Introduction
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**Burgin, Lefebvre and Psychoanalysis. A critical differentiation and reconsideration of the lived and its mis-alignments**

**Introduction**

This chapter charts a particular critical and art theoretical framework that introduces and casts light on a few psychoanalytic concepts that reconsider connected notions of human agency and the lived. An insightful mode of study in Victor Burgin's work is introduced where mis-alignments, problems of equivalence, and inter-connected internal and external realms are unravelled. This requires that psychoanalytic concepts are explored in their journey from psychical realms to the marketplace, and more complexly, in their differentiation - or exploration - of mutable internal-and-external realms. In Burgin's case his thinking develops outside of a traditional aesthetic as elements of the visual cultural, the spatial, and the psychoanalytic - specifically the Lacanian - are brought together. This chapter therefore does not refer to all of Victor Burgin's ideas or to his art work, nor to Lacanian thought in general, but to a specific text by Burgin. His book *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* and specific references to both psychoanalytic concepts and to ideas by Lefebvre are central.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter develops out of a context to find a contemporary frame for Cobra-Lefebvre, to stretch the methodological complexity of the thesis, and to identify problems with tensions induced by it about aspects of human agency and notions of the lived. For example, reconsidering ideas by Lefebvre developed a set of concerns about totalising realms outside of a traditional aesthetic marginalising theoretically important representational insights from art and experiential insights of otherness. That is, the dangers of pre-given levels of thinking to precede the particular contingencies and insights of art practice. Burgin's extended references to Lefebvre, to art theoretical and cultural debates about the lived, and the problems and insights it generates, thereby provide an interesting platform from which to consider aspects of human agency and the lived in the existing literature. Effectively the chapter considers in simple terms a set of debates from several sides - how values and identifications from the art theoretical contest, as well as impinge upon contexts, actions, and histories in the external world.

The chapter goes on to ask, more specifically, to what extent Burgin adequately considers the range of ideas and values about the lived by Lefebvre. It distinguishes a re-contextualisation of Lefebvre's ideas by Burgin, in its methodological complexity, from a re-consideration of Lefebvre's ideas that would be in keeping with Lefebvre's thinking. It asks, for example, how far does Burgin's thought in *In/Different Spaces*, with its

emphasis on Lacanian and psychical realms impinge upon, or consider, aspects of the ordinary lived moment or dimensionality in Lefebvre's thinking? Furthermore, and paradoxically, the chapter asks to what extent Burgin's re-contextualised contexts adequately consider a range of ideas within the psychoanalytic given his primarily Lacanian interpretation of Lefebvre. Effectively the meeting or merging of different guiding rationales in psychoanalysis, Lefebvre, and Burgin are found to be irreconcilable and non-resolveable in many specific and important ways. Given an emphasis on the psychoanalytic the chapter asks can other non-Lacanian and psychoanalytic aspects of human agency be connected or re-considered with aspects of the lived? What are its implications for the conflation of psychical and social contexts, inside and outside space? Both questions are clearly marked by the starting point of their assumptions. Methodologically, the chapter tracks sets of connections or near connections as a means to identify and extrapolate problems produced by their tensions in thinking. Essentially the strengths and weaknesses of different guiding rationales and sets of insights begin to emerge by considering human agency and the lived from different directions.

There are four specific conclusions:

- Burgin's development of Lefebvre's thought through Lacan is considered a re-contextualisation of it. The ordinariness of the fully lived moment in

Lefebvre can be differentiated from Burgin's psychical and social realm and the Lacanian mirror.

- A discursive enquiry by Blum and Nast into alterity and sexual identity makes the chapter critical of Lefebvre's articulation of alterity and its role in theoretical constructions of space. Their enquiry highlights discursive connections between Lacan and Lefebvre. However the particular relevance of specific Lefebvrian concepts are highlighted that are non-Lacanian - the dimensional, embodied agency and produced difference - that refine rather than reject Lefebvre's thinking.
- The chapter examines the scope for bringing together a methodological complexity of ideas about the psychoanalytic and the lived. For example it finds some potential for the development of object relations theory with notions of the lived that differ from Burgin's reading of Winnicott. Furthermore separating out a field of object relations the chapter finds the school of radical alternative within object relations comes closer to sharing facets in common with Lefebvre's thinking than Burgin's, though it argues they do not meet. It finds facets of object relations, particularly through Winnicott, and despite problems, able to consider elements of the lived through objects and spaces, in their own particular terms and contexts.
- Paradoxically the productive value of a disparate realm of mis-alignments, problems of equivalence, and methodological complexity in the lived and the psychoanalytic is also identified. The importance of an experimental and



reflexive mode of study that would re-contextualise Lefebvre's thought in a non-resolveable realm, and where there is no closure or absolute equivalence with the lived, is highlighted as well.

Each layer has different nuances and digressions. Conclusions emerge in ways that are not prescribed but that are, to some extent, also contradictory of one another. In specific instances the chapter differentiates Burgin's realm of thought in *In/different Spaces* that re-contextualises Lefebvre's ideas and that conflates significant differences in the psychoanalytic into the Lacanian. Yet conversely the value of mis-alignments, problems of equivalences, and a methodological complexity, are highlighted as a fundamentally intractable and non-resolveable field with the lived that develops scope for further thought in experimental modes of study. Nevertheless given a starting point of Cobra and Lefebvre the chapter highlights the importance of a differentiation of guiding rationales and of a set of concepts in its lived contexts that include embodied agency, produced difference, and dimensionality.

### **The Value of Identifications, Objects and Drives**

Importantly, Burgin writes - 'Hall concludes with the (crucial) point that it is important to theorize the relation between the unconscious and political cultural processes without ever hoping to reconcile the two, to as it were

“sum” them, or resolve the equation. It is impossible to simply translate one set of processes into the other. It is in fact precisely the recognition of the unconscious which puts an end to this rationalist ambition.’<sup>2</sup> He also says that ‘We need to be cautious about distinguishing processes from contents when we export psychoanalytic theory to the realm of cultural analysis.’<sup>3</sup> However, with an awareness of Hall’s conclusion, Burgin still considers the significance of spaces, objects, and places. In the introduction, he mentions the meeting of theories of the visual cultural which began as semiology, together with the view of culture from British cultural studies, especially in terms of the contradictions within cultural - the lived - and structural paradigms.

Burgin refers in ‘In/different Space’ to Lefebvre, Benjamin, the Surrealists and the Situationists – an art theoretical realm which some shares some connections with the thesis’ subject area of Lefebvre-Cobra. However Burgin’s spatial turn contains significant psychoanalytic input. He also refers to Lacan, to Object Relations (Klein and Winnicott for example) and to Freud. This approach develops psychological processes of identification and the polyvalent understanding of objects and drives, or what he calls the ‘object of objectification.’<sup>4</sup> More commonly understood processes that he refers include the uncanny.

Significantly Burgin thinks about psychoanalysis as a frame for thinking about, or developing, Lefebvre's ideas. He says 'There are nevertheless many points in Lefebvre's complex and densely argued book where his ideas invite the development in terms of psychoanalytic theory.'<sup>5</sup> And he states, although referring principally to Lefebvre and Lacanian psychoanalysis '...there are key moments in *The Production of Space* when he opens doors onto the objects and methods of psychoanalysis.'<sup>6</sup> Broadly speaking, these are some of the strands as well as tensions within Burgin's thinking. They bring together the psychoanalytic, the semiological, and contexts outside of a traditional aesthetic in the lived. Yet just how concepts and values from each meet and what their relative significance is, is important to question.

First however, how and why are problems of equivalence important? What are some of the concepts by which psychoanalysis finds its way into the visual cultural marketplace? These include initially at least Freudian notions of identifications, objects and drives. They develop their own specific and contingent mix of imagined processes, aims, and external contexts. For example Laplanche observes that pride of place amongst the "enigmatic signifiers", those impulses that draw our energy to begin with, is reserved for what Freud called the fantasy of the "primal scene" where...the parents are united in an eternal coitus which combines *jouissance* with death, excluding the baby from all capacity to participate, and therefore to symbolise."<sup>7</sup> Here

therefore, there is an imaginary identification with an act, a drive, and an object, - the parents, parts of the body, or a scene.

Burgen describes a drive theory interpretation with reference to Freud. He writes – ‘In Freud’s description: the “object” is first the object of the *drive* – a drive whose “source” is in bodily excitation...’<sup>8</sup> Freud in his *drive theory* differentiates in complex ways between its sources, aims and objects.<sup>9</sup> His drive theory is an interpretation of processes of identification and objects of the drive. Yet the understanding of the journey from one to the other articulates a psychological, or internal, explanation for a range of impulses and tensions, that lead to, for example, an attachment to specific objects, to aims, or to the playing-out of certain external situations.

Burgen writes: ‘In interpretation of dreams, Freud uses the word identification in two ways: transitively (“identify as”) and reflexively (“identify with”).’<sup>10</sup> The former suggests identification as a composite image, such as a dream, the latter a partial identification with someone else.<sup>11</sup> He also discusses identifications with objects or people as a process of object-cathexis - a working through, or a release, of an attachment to an object. He emphasises their relevance for melancholic, narcissistic, and hysterical processes.<sup>12</sup> Burgen refers to Freud in his 1923 essay ‘The Ego and the Id’ - ‘when it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite

often ensues an alteration of his ego which can only be described as the setting up of an object inside the ego, as it occurs in melancholia.'<sup>13</sup> Identifications with objects then mean they are not literally objects, but find a correspondence in situations, objects, or people for a set of impulses that are inside the ego. In simple ways the starting point of this thinking and its emphases begins to highlight how internal and external processes are separated and linked, but also the ways an internal realm comes to be the more significant or causative than its lived - or cultural - dimension.

Lacan's insights about the mirror stage are important to Burgin's ideas. The mirror stage marks an infant's projection to external objects in the world. Lacan discusses its development as the reintegration of the child's displaced libido into the adult world. In some similar ways 'Freud's discussion of the uncanny is only a special case of his more general observation that what appears to come to us from the outside is often the return of that which we ourselves have placed there - something drawn from a repository of suppressed or repressed memories or fantasies.'<sup>14</sup> Writing about the uncanny Freud remarks: 'They are a...regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people.'<sup>15</sup> Therefore while this approach emphasises complex psychological processes, and complicates external interactions, it does not, in simple terms,

necessarily explore how objects, spaces, or external circumstances affect psychological structures, or develop in their particular mutable terms.

As “identifications with” include identifying with one another, this at its broadest leads Burgin, again referring to Freud, to make a link with processes of group identification - leadership for example - that have social and historical relevance in the external world. In psychological terms he links this to the complexities of identifications with an ego-ideal - a set of ideals or an ideal figure we look up to. Effectively relationship with parents, or ideas about them, can play an important part in our sympathies towards, or actions against, certain kinds of leaders and can more subtly, inform our political motivations. Clearly, psychical levels of experience play a part in collective and social dynamics. Understanding internal and external levels of experience and activity in human agency is complex and multi-faceted. From this angle a lived, cultural dimension is then not necessarily clearly demarcated.

Freud suggests the drives are a cause of activity, and their management has tangible consequences and conflicts. The eros or libidinal drive searches for unities, while the death drive, that he came eventually to propound, dissolves connections. Each to a certain extent also has its own insights or characteristics - the two are not necessarily a synthesis. He suggests the

drives are present in each of the psychical provinces, ego, id, and super-ego, and that the drives, in their relative proportions can replace one another or combine with another. The drives qualities, that can displace one another - or displace childhood memories, experiences, and aggressive fantasies with screen memories - leads to an understanding that the conscious alone is not sufficient in its understanding, but that there are pre-conscious processes - i.e. capable of becoming conscious. While other processes, more problematically, are unconscious, i.e. don't enter the conscious so easily. The unconscious, pre-conscious and conscious are three qualities of psychical processes. In sum, Freud's ideas are not a summary, but several theories, diagnoses, and contesting tendencies and connections in particular psychical formations. Yet the origins of, and the contexts for, these particular psychic provinces, the super-ego or the id for example, were unclear. Nonetheless his thinking does look to a guiding rationale that examines, primarily, though not exclusively, a psychological set of emphases that explain external or object identifications that might be more easily associated with the lived in a cultural sense.

However, Freud's ideas also developed through a range of contexts and developments. Ideas about understanding the object and its identifications, for example, changed. 'Certainly from the perspective of the object's role Freudian theory changed dramatically over the years.'<sup>16</sup> In a sense, there are



different Freud's that are interesting to trace. A structural focus on the ego, and ego ideals – that are 'the conditioning factor of repression'<sup>17</sup> - is introduced by his work on narcissism (1914) as a libidinal content, or structure. This then changes within *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) to ego and object loss. Here, interestingly, 'in the concept of identification, we encounter for the first time the ability of the object to influence the nature of psychic structure.'<sup>18</sup> Identification appears as a normal mechanism in 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego' (1921) where he looks at ties between ego-ideals and people. In 'The Ego and The Id' (1923) he accepts an intra-psychic structural model within the individual. The concept of the super-ego is introduced in this 1923 work, and Chapter III introduces a number of contexts that Freud considers about the super-ego and his problematic notions about its origins. In some of his later work, in the 'New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis' (1933), Freud also turns back to some of his earlier work about sexuality, that has a different context to his theory of drives. Nevertheless he was still to write 'Civilisation and its Discontents' in 1930 that clearly had an emphasis upon cultural and social ties and repression. In its opening pages, he also considers and rejects connections between a city's history and an individual's psychology. However his later 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis' (1940) underlined the mobility of his intra-psychic thought, and the unfinished and composite, rather than theoretical, quality of his thought.

Greenberg and Mitchell say the complexity of Freud's thinking, in the connecting terms of the drives, objects and identifications, is shown by the way in which his theory changes over time.<sup>19</sup> Freud's drive theory developed 'with crucial changes' in his lifetime.<sup>20</sup> Complications and divergences within Freud's thinking develop from his first drive theory to his drive/structure model.<sup>21</sup> Freud's early monotonic and libidinal drive theory about the individual then, once arrived at, became a more flexible drive/structure theory. It included the tensions, developments and structures within the mind. Understanding human agency was a matter of an intrapsychic model within the individual. Aspects of sexuality, libido and of drive/structures were primary. Greenberg and Mitchell say it ultimately led Freud to look to the developmental vicissitudes of the structure of the mind, rather than of external objects. It was to the developmental and tripartite structure of the ego, id and the super-ego in the individual that Freud focussed. This has been developed in terms of 'the essential place of conflict internal to the mind, as established by the second Freudian model.'<sup>22</sup> This is developed, for example by Scarfone and by Laplanche.<sup>23</sup>

The simple point however is that Freud considered a variety of contexts and links between drives, objects and identifications, he considered unsuccessfully a number of contexts about the origins of the super-ego, and

he came to focus on an intra-psychoanalytic understanding of human agency. Freud's emphasis, in many ways, looks to psychoanalytic and primary disturbances. Primary disturbances are psychoanalytic factors that drive and shape our impulses in the first place. Ultimately they attempt to find understanding, together with its identifications, in the complexities of human nature, or in an individual's mental health, rather than in society, relations with one another in a broad social sense, or in external realms. Psychological limitations and to a certain extent reflexive associations, in terms of psychological contents or conflicts are emphasised.

Burgin however considers psychological dimensions together with spatial and art theoretical realms that have particular implications. He writes it is 'the imbrications of social space and mental space' as both constitutive where the difficulties lie, not the exclusion of one from the other.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore in art theoretical terms - 'The city in our actual experience is at the same time an actually existing physical environment, and a city in a novel, a film, a photograph...a city in a pie chart and so on.'<sup>25</sup> So to what extent does Burgin re-consider, or significantly re-configure, ideas by Lefebvre or the psychoanalytic for that matter? Freud considered the drives were no longer a problem of representation and affects, but of identification, and problems of dealing with the object. An underlying psychological and diagnostic interpretation, rather than the representational, is its focus.

Burgin emphasises ideas about objects, drives and identifications, but gives them a specific inflection. This inflection becomes apparent for example in Burgin's interpretation of the mirror, and his emphasis on signification, or phantasy. It is important to ask how Burgin mediates notions of social and mental space with specific layers of Lefebvre's thought. On what basis, and with what implications does a semiological and Lacanian realm adequately cover concepts and values about the lived in either Lefebvre's or cultural theoretical ideas? These sorts of questions begin to highlight, in methodological terms, the specific complexities of merging together different theoretical outlooks as well as the problems and insights of combining and contrasting different levels of reading about them.

### **Burgin's development of Lefebvre-Lacan and its problems**

Burgin's thought creates an important meeting of Lacan and Lefebvre. He turns to Lefebvre for ideas that help articulate a way out of non-literal reductions of the city. However in psychoanalytic terms, Burgin also highlights its theory that posits 'the idea of another locality, another space, another scene, the between perception and unconscious' through the theory of the unconscious.<sup>26</sup> Burgin acknowledges 'in seeking access to that other space of the concrete reality of dreams, to which psychoanalysis is attentive, we may again turn to the work of Lefebvre.'<sup>27</sup> He writes 'there are key

moments in *The Production of Space* when he opens doors onto the objects and methods of psychoanalysis.’<sup>28</sup> He mentions Lefebvre that the problematic of space is ‘composed of questions about mental and social space, about their interconnection.’<sup>29</sup> He compares Lefebvre’s thinking about space in a way that ‘strikingly evokes Lacan’s formulation of the “mirror stage...”’<sup>30</sup> These developments, and their implications, need to be considered carefully.

Burgin refers specifically a number of times to Lefebvre writing that - ‘Space is first of all my body, and then it is my body counterpart or other, its mirror image or shadow; it is the shifting intersection between that which touches, penetrates, threatens or benefits my body on the one hand, and all other bodies on the other.’<sup>31</sup> This particular sentence, in Burgin’s reading of Lefebvre, becomes much more broadly significant, as he develops it into a Lacanian set of connections. He writes about the sentence, ‘The full psychoanalytic implications of such a remark – most obviously, in relation to Lacan’s idea of the mirror stage remain to be developed.’<sup>32</sup>

Burgin’s text develops original and critical insights about Lefebvre’s work, but also problems. He points out Lefebvre’s contradictory remarks about the body and space, where he divides ‘the labouring body from the perceiving body, in which perceptual processes are seen as essentially passive.’

Effectively, that Lefebvre divides the passive body (senses) from the active body (labour) thereby relegating the senses.<sup>33</sup> The separation, Burgin suggests importantly is artificial, and that it has consequences for reconsidering Lefebvre's ideas about representation. 'Lefebvre's insistence on the centrality of the body subverts the distinction between "representations of space" and "representational space" (representations of space are the spaces of planners, while 'representational spaces' or spaces of representation embody complex symbols and the lived).<sup>34</sup> Burgin thereby highlights the centrality of the body within representations of space *and* representational space that re-articulate a number of Lefebvre's distinctions that separate them in one swoop. Its consequences are to re-orient significantly a number of contexts and interpretations of Lefebvre's thought that recontextualises and examines a different set of mediated contexts.

In a sub-section called 'Fantasies of PostModern Geography' Burgin, in some similar ways to Rosalyn Deutsche, distinguishes critically the differences between a Postmodern Geography, as articulated by Soja and Jameson, and creative articulations of space such as Lefebvre's.<sup>35</sup> He refers to Lefebvre's three moments of social space - the perceived, the conceived, and the lived (it is the lived in Lefebvre's thought about space that refers to representational space). Burgin mentions representational space is space appropriated by the imagination and that Lefebvre writes that it "overlays

physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” and is predominantly non-verbal in nature.’<sup>36</sup> He writes: ‘It is precisely in his attempt to account for the simultaneous imbrication of the physical and the psychological that the ambition, and difficulty of Lefebvre’s work lies.’<sup>37</sup>

Burgin’s emphasis to a certain extent reduces aspects of space and human agency to a Lacanian, and primarily semiological, enquiry with a number of consequences. Given extensive references to Lefebvre, in simple terms, he envelops space within the body, the mirror and communications systems. The possibility of spaces outside of, or separate from, the body are merged. The Lacanian mirror is highlighted. It is a two-dimensional realm defined by psychical processes that Burgin links to Lacan’s ‘between perception and consciousness’ and Freud’s ‘another locality.’<sup>38</sup> The significance of some of Barthes work and of representation is also introduced, though Burgin asks why Barthes ‘conflates psychical space with the space of visual perception, which in turn is modelled on Euclid.’<sup>39</sup> Referring to a paper by Freud he suggests the spatial qualities of the psychical *mis-en-scene* are clearly non-Euclidean: different objects may occupy the same space at the same (non)instant, as in condensation in dreams; or subject and object may collapse into each other. But nonetheless the particularities of Lefebvre’s ideas about space, or of Benjamin’s that he refers about objects and history, are marginalised.



Burgin describes Walter Benjamin's Paris Arcade Project, and the modernist buildings they presaged as representing the identification and partial development of a pre-oedipal, maternal space. And experiences of this maternal space exude certain qualities: 'In this space it is not simply that the boundaries are "porous", but that the subject itself is *soluble*. This space is the source of bliss and terror, of the oceanic feeling, and of the feeling of coming apart; just as it is at the origin of feelings of being invaded, overwhelmed, suffocated.'<sup>40</sup> Interestingly Burgin looks to the Surrealists leader, André Breton's novel, *Najda*, and to Benjamin's writing about Naples to explore some of these issues. He links Breton's tormented thoughts about *Najda* in the context of the receding infantile space of magic that recedes 'as the ego forms out of the nucleus of early object relations – a precarious process.'<sup>41</sup> He highlights Klein's work on schizoid mechanisms, where, according to Klein 'The early ego lacks cohesion, and a tendency towards integration alternates with a tendency towards disintegration, a falling to bits.'<sup>42</sup> That it 'may lead to subsequent crises of delimitation of ego/object boundaries, to "psychosis."<sup>43</sup> That is, the identification with objects also can include an ego's own psychological processes that can be split, or in formation. Burgin refers to the Surrealist's description of *Najda* whereby she 'seems to have little sense of her own independent existence *without* the streets, and the encounters they offered.'<sup>44</sup> He emphasises a realm that

collapses the distinctions of Najda's 'being in the world,' of the enigmatic in the everyday, or of the uncanny.

The Surrealists, Benjamin, and Lefebvre bring together sets of tensions in interesting ways. Importantly for Burgin, a focus whereby the only world we can know is a world which is always already represented or materialised also minimalises its creative identifications. Burgin emphasises creative identifications and their social and psychical mediations. Yet it becomes apparent that there are many specific differences between Lefebvre and Burgin, or for that matter Burgin and Benjamin that are not easily resolveable but are both realms outside of a traditional aesthetic. Lefebvre's focus on the everyday, or on the ordinariness of the lived moment, and its connections to art theoretical ideas, are not fathomed by Burgin's Lacanian contexts. Similarly Benjamin's realm of objects and arcades, of history, is different from Burgin's reading of images and spaces. An emphasis on communication systems marginalises realms and spaces outside of a traditional aesthetic. Arguably, Lefebvre's thought has a closer set of links to the Surrealists and Benjamin than to Burgin and Lacan. Similarities between Lefebvre and Benjamin have been highlighted by Shields, while Lefebvre also had contact with, though was critical of the Surrealists, and the Surrealist unconscious.

While Burgin attempts to fathom aspects of interior and exterior space in complex ways, a corollary of his thought emphasises the dimensional and contexts outside of a traditional aesthetic in similar ways. In a chapter titled 'The City in Pieces' Burgin develops distinctions about interior and exterior, private and public, object and subject. To develop his case, Burgin refers to Lefebvre's thinking about facades and about the city as a biological organism.<sup>45</sup> In this different context he repeats again Lefebvre's words that 'space is first of all my body, and then it is my body counterpart...'<sup>46</sup> It is to Lefebvre, and to biological contexts of thought, that Burgin looks for ideas that explore the permeability of inside and outside.<sup>47</sup> A problem is that Burgin recontextualises Lefebvre's thought but refers back to Lefebvre's thinking to develop it. He writes Lefebvre's example of a biological organism shows the distinction between external and internal can never be valid. Instead he explores the permeability of inside and outside space, and relative closure as a creation of a social order rather than a natural order. He asks to what extent is the interior/exterior itself an illusion? Can it be separated out quite so simply? He says "The transgressional magic of the flâneur is to make the interior appear on the 'wrong side' of its bounding wall, the wrong side of the façade. Certainly the transformation is an illusion, but then the interior itself is an illusion – in a double sense."<sup>48</sup>

Quoting Lefebvre, Burgin writes - 'As exact a picture as possible of this space would differ considerably from the one embodied in the representational space which its inhabitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice.'<sup>49</sup> From this he adduces: 'If the built environment is conceived of in terms of the body, then a different body of the city is at issue here.'<sup>50</sup> And he goes on to discuss the individual libidinal body, its surfaces and linings, as articulated by Jean-Francois Lyotard. Burgin is careful to distinguish confusions about anthropomorphized cities, and he suggests connections between bodies, organisms and cities in terms of interior linings and undifferentiated contiguities. However from Lefebvre's perspective, a 'different body of the city' would be understood in a fundamentally different way from Burgin's and within a differentiated set of contexts. Its distinction is therefore important to highlight.

In *Rhythmanalysis* for example Lefebvre writes specifically that he is not suggesting a town is a body as a biological organism though it is, like the body, a living organism or a living body, with its own rhythms, alongside associations, interactions, or reciprocal actions.<sup>51</sup> Lefebvre states - 'Furthermore, this human body is the site and place of interaction between the biological, the physiological (nature) and the social (often called the cultural), where each of these levels, each of these dimensions, has its own

specificity, therefore its space-time.'<sup>52</sup> In Lefebvre's model there are realms outside of the body, and a complex interaction of realms. Lebas and Kofman in *Writing Cities*, who are translators of Lefebvre's writings, describe its set of relationship in a different way. 'He (Lefebvre) does not however elaborate at length what would be a dialectical relationship between the production of the sexualized body and its relationship to and positioning in lived and conceived spaces.'<sup>53</sup> To move from Lefebvre's example of a biological organism to 'the different body of the city,' and seemingly, within a context of a libidinal body, Burgin incorporates facets of Lyotard, to the detriment of Lefebvre's thought. The problem is not that Burgin explores facets of the libidinal body and the city as an interior lining. It is, it seems to suggest, that his thought develops out of a reconsideration of Lefebvre's guiding rationale that actually examines a different set of concepts, values and spaces in specific ways.

In *In/different Spaces* the psychical becomes the primary realm that looks inward and outward. It is primarily both a mental and social realm. Group identification comes to be identified with the ego-ideal though to what extent this marginalises particular historical or political factors is unclear. To what extent aspects of a psychical and spatial outlook can be developed from Lefebvre's paradigm is problematic and brings together a set of intractable problems in interesting ways. Burgin writes, (although Lefebvre was critical

of Foucault) along with Foucault, Lefebvre rejected all historicist teleologies 'as woodenly implausible.'<sup>54</sup> He mentions 'The problem of history nevertheless remained, albeit in pieces, its fragments now swept to the margins of the newly spatial critical paradigm.'<sup>55</sup>

Burgin articulates a sense of unbelonging, again referring to Lefebvre: 'Lefebvre was perhaps the first to identify "loss of identity" as a "besetting terror" of the trial by space.'<sup>56</sup> He implicates time and history and the 'redrawing old maps of identity – national, cultural and individual.' He says 'An identity implies not only a location but a duration, a history. A lost identity is lost not only in space, but in time. We might better say, in "space-time."<sup>57</sup> And he concludes 'The chapters that follow were written with no respect for this distinction between the social and the psychical, as the distinction is itself an abstraction, a fantasy.'<sup>58</sup> The central point however is that moving through Lefebvre's rejection of historicist teleologies to a psychical framing reconstitutes, rather than re-considers, Lefebvre's writing with a new set of emphases. In Lefebvre, ideas about spaces and social realms incorporate dimensions outside of the psychical and individual. Burgin's focus emphasises problems of the psycho-social, identity, identifications, the Lacanian mirror and the body.

## Unravelling Lefebvre from Lacan – the strengths and weaknesses of Lefebvre

The meeting of Lefebvre and Lacan can be thought through further on a number of levels. From it a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Lefebvre's concepts emerge, as to a certain extent, do the strengths and weaknesses of Burgin's ideas. Differentiating a set of ideas and insights on different levels begins to highlight specific sets of problems that converge in realms outside a traditional aesthetic. For example a discursive enquiry into Lefebvre's work on space or alterity finds important connections with Lacan's thought as well as differences. Bringing ideas by Lefebvre and Lacan together in a discursive enquiry, and later by Lefebvre, Burgin and range of psychoanalytic ideas rather than only the Lacanian, thereby highlights certain connections and problems that a political theory would not. The strengths and weaknesses of different guiding rationales need unravelling further.

Blum and Nast in an article 'Where's the Difference? The heterosexualisation of alterity in Henri Lefebvre and Jacques Lacan' describe the mirror for Lacan as an illusory totality of a 'self'.<sup>59</sup> 'The mirror-image is the ideal or totalized ego the infant longs to *become*'<sup>60</sup> – this is Lacan's imago that emphasises a fantasmatic quality. Subsequently 'Subjectivity is spatially and ontologically *decentered*; the subject is shaped literally from the



*outside in*’ and the sense of alterity is ‘fundamentally based upon misrecognition.’<sup>61</sup> Crucially ‘both subjectivity and alterity, which are mutually constitutive, happen in the child’s relationship with its own image.’<sup>62</sup> Blum and Nast note nonetheless that what is ‘left undeveloped by Lacan is the degree to which mirroring entails a number of *spatial* violations’ and that ‘the image itself is two dimensional and accordingly founds a two-dimensional subject’, and that ‘the image is a symmetrical inversion of the spectating body. That the mirror allows the spectating child to occupy both positions at once means that the distance, difference in dimensionality, and asymmetry between them are fantasmatically collapsed.’<sup>63</sup>

Lefebvre, write Blum and Nast, criticises Lacan’s notion of mirroring on three levels. ‘That mirroring is not about a disembodied ego passively locating itself in some two-dimensional, apolitical surface’ that, ‘it is also not about this disembodied ego serving as a tabula rasa onto which ideal images are introjected passively, narcissistically,’ and that ‘mirroring is not restricted to the human form and to dyadic, specular relationships between two individuals or between individual and image.’<sup>64</sup> For Lefebvre ‘the subject experiences and reproduces the socio-spatial order of the *imago mundi* through a corporealised process of *identification* and *imitation* that is very different from Lacan’s two-dimensional subjectivity.’<sup>65</sup> Lefebvre’s formulation of alterity, unlike Lacan, is ‘bound into a socially wide and

dimensionally deep space of power and engagement.<sup>66</sup> 'The world according to Lefebvre, could, be reduced to two dimensions, but only by replacing bodily, intersubjective engagements with visual consumption.'<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore Lefebvre opposed structuralisms, and was wary of the visual in structuralist semiotic approaches to space. Blum and Nast point out, what is overlooked in structuralism, Lefebvre argues, on the near side, is the body – 'For it is by means of the body that space is perceived, lived –and produced. On the far side of the readable/visible, and equally absent ...is power.'<sup>68</sup> Similarly 'For Lefebvre then what is lacking in Lacan's analysis of mirroring is some recognition of underlying material, spatial, and political forces that exceed the visual domain.'<sup>69</sup> As Lefebvre says in the *Production of Space*: 'Should the 'ego' fail to reassert hegemony over itself by defying its own image, it must become narcissus – or Alice.'<sup>70</sup> Although Lefebvre writes that Lacan's theory of the mirror stage 'freezes the ego into a rigid form...' Despite similarities to Lacan's *imago*, 'Lefebvre's outside world, in contrast to that of Lacan's, resists the two dimensional snapshot...'<sup>71</sup> These comments highlight some of Burgin's Lacanian framing of realms outside of a traditional aesthetic.

It is interesting that separating out Lefebvre from Lacan, on a discursive level, is not as simple as it seems either. Its complexities highlight a shared

set of limitations in both. Blum and Nast show that 'rather than discarding these cords of Lacanian theory, Lefebvre reweaves them.'<sup>72</sup> Mirroring for Lefebvre 'involves the entirety of a subject's relationship to a sociospatial landscape; it is about how a subject identifies with and becomes materially and spatially embedded within the material world.'<sup>73</sup> Or 'We project onto the entire material world the fantasmatic coherence of our ego.' This mirroring is placed in a complex evolutionary framework of spatial history born through intersubjectivity and political engagement. And 'analogous to Lacan's visually mediated passage from the real to the mirror stage, Lefebvre's subject emerges bodily and politically from natural space into what he calls *absolute space*.'<sup>74</sup> It is for Lefebvre and Lacan that these movements found alterity.

Natural space is considered by Lefebvre as 'the origin, and the original model, of the social process – perhaps even the basis of all 'originality.'<sup>75</sup> Defined 'in only the vaguest terms' it has important characteristics. It seems to have existed during the neolithic period – in prehistory, it suggests natural space is a prediscursive space, existing outside of a symbolic order, in a world Lefebvre describes as of 'chaos which precedes the advent of the body,'<sup>76</sup> and that its descriptions as originary, rhythmic, prepolitical are metaphors tied to the maternal. Natural space, they say, also sounds suspiciously like Lacan's real. Lefebvre's difference only emerges 'as an

affect of the center's agency.'<sup>77</sup> Struggles in the margins become reactionary rather than generative. His descriptions of the feminine 'makes it difficult to grasp how he might ever theorise women's agency.'<sup>78</sup> Because male agency is the only agency identifiable, femininity of all kinds is ultimately represented as politically irrelevant.'<sup>79</sup> Women's agency therefore problematises Lefebvre's formations of meaning and of space. It could be added that the discursive terms of Lefebvre's natural space founds an identification with an originary or Neolithic space.

Lefebvre's schema is criticised for being 'evolutionary, and despite statements to the contrary, totalizing.' Therefore 'All struggles are consequently subordinated to an overarching telos...'<sup>80</sup> This reproduces Lefebvre's framework 'equating the paternal with activity, movement, force, history, while the maternal is passive, immobile, subject to force and history.'<sup>81</sup> They write: 'Most problematic is the degree to which Lefebvre's version of heterosexuality turns on active-passive binary. If activity is that which materially inscribes the body in history, feminine bodies necessarily become invisible.'<sup>82</sup> Despite significant differences about dimensionality and agency in Lefebvre and Lacan, alterity for both is formed through the maternal with significant limitations for both. While Burgin brings together Lefebvre and Lacan, Blum and Nast find the discursive basis of Lefebvre's specific reweaving of Lacanian theory its weakness. There are significant

discursive insights into the limitations of Lefebvre's reading of space and women's agency and, it will be found, potential difficulties with men's agency.

Blum and Nast write that both Lefebvre and Lacan, with differences, explain 'how the dyadic structure of mirroring is transcended or ruptured through 'outside' forces.' They claim that 'Lefebvre stridently repudiates and yet builds upon Lacan's version of the Phallus.' For Lacan it is the 'unmediated identification in the imaginary register (that) ruptures with the intrusion of a third term, the phallus, signifier of the division and desire that give rise to subjectivity.' The phallus arises from and represents alterity, and is thereby inextricably bound to a heterosexualisation of difference. It is because it is not real, it cannot be identified with an organ, that the effects of it are profound. 'For Lacan the phallus is the signifier of the desire for that which will put an end to desire – which is ultimately unattainable by the subject.' Although it is the entrance into language that founds the symbolic domain in the subject, and he locates subjectivity entirely in language, of which the body becomes merely an effect.<sup>83</sup>

Lacan abides by a specific paternal order, which thereby defines alterity through the renouncing of the mother's body. Yet they indicate how Lefebvre contests Lacanian notions about the incest taboo as the cornerstone

of civilisation, of its suppression of the body itself, and of its placing a logical, epistemological and anthropological priority of language over space.<sup>84</sup> If prohibition upon incest with the mother in a given paternal framework is a founding principle of Lacanian thinking then, referring to a work by John Brenkman, 'the male child encounters the law limiting his desire in the voice of the command and the symbols designating the father as *castrator* and *law giver*. But it is through the process of recognizing himself in the father that he learns masculinity and heterosexuality.'<sup>85</sup> Crucially '(h)is relation to his mother *becomes* oedipal only as he is socialised into masculinity and heterosexuality.'<sup>86</sup> It is, Blum and Nast say, these 'bourgeois heterosexualized positions on the nuclear family (that) undergrid and inform Lacan's theorisation of psychosexuality.' Referring to Brenkman's work it gives an account of how psychoanalysis has suppressed the social origins of masculinity.

'In contrast, corporeality and 'space' are central to Lefebvre's history, which he locates not in the divergence of the mothers desire away from the child, but in the desire of various political forces 'outside' absolute space.'<sup>87</sup> These forces rupture unmediated social relations 'and allows for the production of an abstract space sustained by a phallic political agency, what he calls the "phallic formant." This they say clearly draws on psychoanalytic constructions of the phallus. They say Lefebvre thereby locates Lacan's

version of the phallus in corporeal, spatial, political and economic terms.<sup>88</sup>

‘While Lacan claims that the phallus is the necessary cornerstone of language and culture (it rescues us from an oppressive maternal) Lefebvre casts the phallus in morally and structurally negative terms.’ However ‘Lefebvre’s gendered dialectic reproduces the very binary logic sustaining Lacan’s phallic regime.’<sup>89</sup> They write ‘... his theorisation of alterity through psychoanalytically informed accounts and his sustained reworking of these accounts are systematically disregarded.’<sup>90</sup> Blum and Nast write ‘Consequently it is not recognised that Lefebvre’s spatially dialectical understanding of history is not founded on class struggle (Harvey1990, Merrifield, 1993), but on the construction of alterity itself.’<sup>91</sup>

Nonetheless their criticisms are couched sympathetically in terms of finding Lefebvre’s work ground breaking, and contributing towards realms outside of the mirror - produced differences, partial practices, and non-phallic economies of desire. To a certain extent theirs is a re-consideration of Lefebvre’s ideas. Effectively they develop a refined understanding of the ideas of Lefebvre from the contexts of Lacan, although they are critical of Lefebvre’s building on Lacan’s notion of women’s agency and on the Lacanian phallus. However they take, in referring to the works of Brenkman for example, a cultural critique of psychoanalysis and point to notions of social origins of masculine agency. They write the phallus, in Lefebvre’s

ideas, is a direction of political agency, force and violence.<sup>92</sup> They suggest ways of moving beyond the theoretical impasses suggested by the similarities of Lacan's and Lefebvre's thinking by referring to the works of Butler, Grosz and Irigaray.<sup>93</sup> Given specific problems of alterity in women's and men's agency, concepts and values outside of a traditional aesthetic and outside of a Lacanian mirror link to a realm of embodiment and dimensionality. The differentiation of a Lacanian imaginary and a Lacanian mirror from a dimensional political realm is highlighted.

### **Object Relations and the lived: near connections and problems**

The Lacanian, and aspects of (post) sexual identity, however are not the only means by which to re-consider a set of connections or productive tensions with ideas about the lived. Burgin attempts to develop connections between Lacan and Lefebvre but also re-considers a range of psychoanalytic perspectives. However there are many important differences between Lacan and Lefebvre, but also between Lacan and other psychoanalytic schools that would inflect the mirror, and imaginary and political dimensions, in a realm of the lived and the psychoanalytic with other re-contextualised and non-resolveable nuances.

Burgin mentions that both Lefebvre and Lacan were born in the same year, 1901, highlighting a shared historical context - both for example had early



relations with the Surrealists.<sup>94</sup> Lebas and Kofman write that Lefebvre attended a conference at which Lacan was present. However they also state clearly that Lefebvre's thinking towards psychoanalysis hardened in the 60s and that he poured scorn on Lacan. They say 'Lefebvre considered for the most part that the concept of the unconscious had been manipulated and reduced to a fetishized species.'<sup>95</sup> More broadly in Lefebvre's view 'Freud had conceptualised sexuality and brought to light sexual misery, but psychoanalysis had in turn generated an ideology of normality and mythology of desire;'<sup>96</sup> that psychoanalysis has a tendency to ignore capitalism and the state. 'Furthermore, for Freud, like Heidegger, difference disappears in such a way that the masculine represents the universal.'<sup>97</sup>

Lefebvre scholars emphasise the differences between psychoanalysis and Lefebvre. The two in theoretical terms are simply not connected. Elden describes that Lefebvre crossed swords with psychoanalysis, as well as with other key intellectual trends.'<sup>98</sup> Lefebvre nonetheless does make a few important references to psychoanalysis, and he adopts some of its terminology. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre transcribes a number of psychoanalytic concepts, where terms like ego, narcissism, phallic, desire, maternal, unconscious are used.<sup>99</sup> In his last work, Lefebvre's esoteric description of a rhythm analyst is that he would have some points in common with a psychoanalyst.<sup>100</sup> The practical application of the *dialectic*, and its

*regressive-progressive* steps or method, Lefebvre claims 'allow us to explore the possible.'<sup>101</sup> Yet, Lefebvre says 'this method was also used in Freud's analyses. First an analysis of the present symptoms of the crisis; a return to decisive moments in the patients history; a return to the present in the light of those moments.'<sup>102</sup> The practical and the methodological, the case by case basis that is developed by both situates Lefebvre and psychoanalysis in facets of a clinical and causal diagnosis of lived experience.<sup>103</sup> They shared what Lefebvre considered were practical answers, and in this sense he calls psychoanalytic thinkers practicians.<sup>104</sup> Elden says '...Heidegger's notion of Dasein is criticized for its lack of sex, and Lefebvre suggests that the Freudian theory of the Libido 'is often richer and closer to the concrete.'<sup>105</sup> In other words, despite fundamental theoretical differences, he makes a few references to, and comparisons with, psychoanalysis.

A comparative context of Lefebvre and Lacan in historical terms would show up more differences than similarities. French psychoanalytic history and its links are complex. André Green, for example discusses the specifics of the situation of psychoanalysis in France that developed differently to that of America and England, where because of the two World Wars there was no real accumulation of a psychoanalytic tradition.<sup>106</sup> He mentions the prevalence of Marxism, and of philosophical and anthropological conceptions in France. He mentions the social psychiatric and Lacanian

leanings of French psychoanalysis, but then highlights the split away by Lacan's opponents and pupils within psychoanalysis in the 50s and 60s.<sup>107</sup> Winnicott, Green says, was significant in French psychoanalysis where his ideas were developed partially in opposition to Lacan.<sup>108</sup> An historical comparison of Lefebvre and Lacan would therefore develop within specific conceptual and historical frameworks of French psychoanalysis that are complex in their own terms. Lacan's theory of the mirror also has its own problematic history within psychoanalysis, so differentiating Lacan's ideas from other psychoanalytic outlooks or criticisms feeds into another set of contexts that differ from Lacan's. According to Phillips 'The schism between Lacan and the International Psychoanalytical Association became a central feature of Freudian thinking as it spread globally, and remains so to this day.'<sup>109</sup> Therefore the re-contextualised emphasis here focuses on non-Lacanian psychoanalytic insights in a non-resolveable realm that brings together the psychoanalytic and Lefebvre's contexts of thinking to explore potential connections or problems of equivalence and identification. Burgin for example refers to Winnicott and Klein, both of whom are object relations theorists. How might object relations theory view a realm of the lived? How might its inflections develop notions of internal/external realms and the mirror, or find a set of connections with the lived in a dimensional and imaginary realm?

Object relations theory, however, in simplified terms, is not a monolithic theoretical field. Greenberg and Mitchell however discuss its commonalities and also its differences. Object relations theory, or perhaps more appropriately, object relations theories, refer to the observation that people live simultaneously in an external and internal world.<sup>110</sup> Greenberg and Mitchell, say ‘...the term refers to individuals’ interactions with external and internal (real and imaginary) other people, and to the relationship between their internal and external object worlds.’<sup>111</sup> According to Greenberg and Mitchell the term object describes both real people in the external world and images of them that is ‘useful in describing the interchange between “inside” and “outside”...’<sup>112</sup> The object connotes a wide range of characteristics, in a patient’s world populated by objects that can be ‘static, benign, malignant, alive or dead and so on.’<sup>113</sup> The term suggests tangibility – ‘experiential reality of transactions in the external world’<sup>114</sup> though they do not imply the physical reality of the objects, as entities or homunculi in the mind.<sup>115</sup> And that the object despite its durability can also be modified and manipulated. Reshaped, painted, or destroyed.

While the psychoanalytic object is not simply an entity existing in time and space,<sup>116</sup> Greenberg and Mitchell also say, in some ways similar to Burgin’s description of the object, ‘The object in Freud’s language is the libidinal object’ and an inherent part of Freud’s drive theory.<sup>117</sup> ‘Freud’s object is a

thing, but it is not *any* thing; it is *the* thing which is the target of the drive.’<sup>118</sup>

This, the drive structure model, is the first model for dealing with object relations theory that stretches and adapts Freud’s principal conceptual model on drives. A second more radical strategy for dealing with object relations, the relational structure model, they say, has been to replace the drive theory model in a framework ‘in which relations with others constitute the fundamental building blocks of mental life.’<sup>119</sup> This was, for example, developed by Sullivan and by Fairbairn.<sup>120</sup> Although in simple terms each has a different set of implications both models therefore are developed within object relations. Yet, in a contemporary context ‘One of the most controversial issues in contemporary psychoanalytic thinking, bearing decisively on the problems of object relations, concerns the nature of the fundamental ties which bind people together.’<sup>121</sup>

In terms of the role of objects and objects relations theory, developed after Freud’s lifetime, Greenberg and Mitchell say that the term object and object relations is used by psychoanalytical theorists in different ways and in specific contexts.<sup>122</sup> The spectrum of thinking within object relations theory is broad ranging. It is not a singular field. Greenberg and Mitchell however introduce broad-ranging themes about the relevance of objects, events, situations, and individual shapes as *structures*; of goals of human activity as *motivation*; and of patterns of transformation as *development*.<sup>123</sup> They

develop a general sense of the term because of its wide and competing use in psychoanalytic literature: 'Much of the heterogeneity and complexity of current psychoanalytic theory is clarified by an approach that takes at its starting point the dialectical tension between these competing strategies for understanding object relations...'<sup>124</sup> Objects include parts of the body, objects of the drive that primarily focus on the maternal relationship, and relations with one another.

However these theories cannot simply be re-modified into a single jigsaw of an 'object relations theory.' Greenberg and Mitchell write: 'We refer to object relations as a common "problem" because there is no consensus within the current psychoanalytic literature concerning their origins, their meanings, or the major patterns of their transformation.'<sup>125</sup> Furthermore tensions between competing strategies include differences between object relations theory and Freudian theory. It is therefore only to specific concepts or to specific schools within object relations that connections with the lived might be substantiated

Burgen mentions Winnicott's notion of transitional objects, phenomena, and spaces. He refers to Winnicott who, about transitional objects, writes that he would never ask 'Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?' The important point is that no decision on this is expected. The

question is not to be formulated.’<sup>126</sup> He writes ‘Winnicott himself was the first to apply his concepts to the cultural sphere. About the transitional object Winnicott acknowledges ‘It is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between “inner psychic reality” and “the external world as perceived by two persons in common,” that is to say, over the whole cultural field.’<sup>127</sup> The location of cultural experience, the title of a chapter by Winnicott in ‘Playing and Reality,’ Burgin compares with Fanon’s enunciative space and he describes significantly the potential for an inter-play between a me and objects outside of omnipotent control.

For Burgin, however, it is an image that occupies this Winnicottian space, and that is the location of cultural experience. Yet this is also a development of Burgin’s Lacanian thinking about the mirror as well as it is about Winnicott. For example creativity for Winnicott, does seem to be distinguished by him from art. ‘In order to look into the theory that analysts use in their work to see where creativeness has a place it is necessary, as I have already stated, to separate the idea of the creation from works of art.’ He says ‘It is true that a creation can be a picture or a house or a garden or a costume or a hairstyle or a symphony... the creativity that concerns me here is a universal. It belongs to being alive.’<sup>128</sup> He writes ‘That creativity that we

are studying here belongs to the approach of the individual to external reality...to enable the individual to become a person living and taking part in the life of the community.'<sup>129</sup>

Burgin's exclusive development of Winnicott's ideas into a realm of images and art - even though images and squiggles are a fundamentally important psychological facet of Winnicott's thinking - mimic, arguably, Burgin's development of Lefebvre's ideas into semiological contexts. Further, while it is not necessarily resolved where Winnicott's cultural space is, as it is neither inside nor outside, it is not necessarily a psychical space either. Winnicott is careful to distinguish, for example, external reality, inner psychical reality, and potential space.<sup>130</sup> Burgin thereby explores a Lacanian re-casting of both Lefebvre and Winnicott and concentrates on its semiological insights. Yet in a different re-casting again it could be highlighted that although Winnicott is a paediatrician he references Foucault, cultural experience, the relevance of creative activity, and the importance of levels of idealism.<sup>131</sup> It could be asked from this perspective what constitutes a good enough environment, cultural space and what constitutes its needs and criteria? The confluence of elements of Lefebvre's emphasis on creative activity and on representational space with facets of Winnicott's ideas about transitional space would also make an interesting study.



Greenberg and Mitchell say 'A central and common theme of relational/structure theorists in Object relations include 'the transformation of psychoanalytic metapsychology from a theoretical framework which makes relations with others, real and imagined, the conceptual and interpretative hub.'<sup>132</sup> These might be called social, or *sociological object relations*. The unit of study is not the individual but the relational matrix constituted by the individual in interaction with significant others. However the relational/structural theories are not singular either – each develops its own set of concepts and contents. In historical terms however they are divided by Greenberg and Mitchell into four groups; the Culturalists or Interpersonal psychoanalysts; The Alternatives, where they include Klein, and the British School of Object relations theory; theories of accommodation (that is that claim to accommodate Freud's drive theory); and mixed models strategies. Greenberg and Mitchell for example describe Klein's as sows the seeds from which developed the relational/structural model theories of the "British School."<sup>133</sup> While they say the first group 'shared a common belief that classical Freudian theory underemphasized the larger social and cultural context...'<sup>134</sup> And it is represented, particularly by its critics, as 'sociological.'<sup>135</sup> These are defined by a strategy of radical alternative by Greenberg and Mitchell that in one way or other place 'relations with others at the centre of the theory...' and where the drive concept is abandoned.<sup>136</sup>

Fromm for example, in his humanistic psychoanalysis integrated some of the work of Marx and Freud.

In terms of locating a simplified philosophical context to drive/structure and relational structure theory Greenberg and Mitchell say the former embodies an arena of the individual unit, or the individual mind. That man is essentially an individual animal. They refer to Hobbesian pessimism and to Locke. The state is not seen to provide anything positive, fulfilment is found on an individual level, and embodies Isaiah Berlin's concept of 'negative liberty'. The second school of the relational structure sees man as essentially a social animal. Its philosophical roots are in Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx, with Marx's premise that human satisfactions and goals are realisable only within a community, and it relates to Berlin's concept of 'Positive liberty.'<sup>137</sup> About this Greenburg and Mitchell say 'Meaning in human life is possible only through social fulfilment. The individual by himself cannot create a fully human life.'<sup>138</sup> However, quoting Berlin they say each makes absolute claims and each is a divergent and irreconcilable attitude. They say 'Psychoanalytic models rest upon similar irreconcilable claims concerning the human condition.'<sup>139</sup> Each constructs a natural and subjective order of its own and they say that it is neither useful nor appropriate to question whether either drive structure or relational structure models are "right" or "wrong".

They write it is 'the rich interplay between these visions that will generate creative dialogue.'<sup>140</sup>

In this context a case could be made for thinking through psychoanalytic and sociological contexts of thinking. For example it is on this sociological, or collective and individual, level that Lefebvre's work can be compared and contrasted with the nuances of the relational/structure theories in object relations. The social and productive dimensions of social relations are a central facet of Lefebvre's work. He's a sociologist. His goal is the enriching of social relations and the study of social products and social relations.<sup>141</sup> Yet more specifically the individual and the social are, arguably, intrinsically linked elements. He values highly aspects of social relations and the fully lived, that are values or motivations shared by the relational structure theorists. The ideas of specific theorists for example could be contrasted with theorists of radical alternative within relational/structural theories, Fromm for example. Philip Wander in his introduction to Lefebvre does make reference to Fromm.<sup>142</sup>

In the theory of moments Lefebvre writes moments are 'social relationships and forms of individualised consciousness,' and 'the theory of moments thus repeats with a new meaning the theory of the "Total Man."'<sup>143</sup> He calls man an 'indivisibly individual and social being' or 'socio-individual man.'<sup>144</sup> And

it is this individual-social realm that Lefebvre ascribes as 'a high level.' Lefebvre scholar, Elden says 'Lefebvre's work on moments is not intended to be epistemology, or ontology, or a critique of ontology, but a study of everyday reality 'at a *sociological* level' at which the individual is not separate from the social' (Lefebvre's emphasis).<sup>145</sup> Therefore specific motivating concepts in the theory of moments or of mediating contexts outside the self might also be contrasted and explored. Yet the starting point of its assumptions about human agency has particular implications for navigating, or not navigating, problems of equivalence. However while these concepts underline some commonalities, neither are they an equivalent to object relations. They are merely a set of near connections and although they do not meet they highlight an interesting set of tensions that can be compared and contrasted or that re-consider new specific concepts and contexts.

The ideas of Winnicott for example are considered in a multi-disciplinary field within psychoanalytic and cultural contexts. He is given a significant role in a *New Formations* feature about 'Psychoanalysis and Culture.'<sup>146</sup> Winnicott's notion of play, creativity, and transitional or potential space are concepts that generate a creative interplay of ideas that would concentrate on a realm outside of a traditional aesthetic in ways that differ from Burgin's Lacanian thinking.. 'An emphasis on individual creativity, in both an ordinary way, as the necessary achievement of all, as well as in the

extraordinary way of the artist, is also a distinctive contribution of Winnicott's.<sup>147</sup> He emphasises the specificity of the terms of the object itself for the child, in contrast for example to dogmatic or pre-conceived interpretations, including psychoanalytic ones.<sup>148</sup>

Yet Winnicott's work is not without its critics, or, its limitations. Similarly attempts to develop art and cultural realms through object relations are also not without problems and detractors. It might be helpful to summarise briefly a few strengths and weaknesses of an object relations-led investigation to ideas about putative lived realms. Given the discursive problems of alterity and women's agency in Lacan and Lefebvre's work, it is significant that a contemporary interpreter of Winnicott's work, Green says 'On the one hand I accept the profound originality and the creativity of most of the concepts introduced by Winnicott in psychoanalysis; on the other, I disagree with Winnicott's explanation of their supposed origin in the mother-baby relationship.'<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless Green writes 'Creative experiences are sometimes the only possible way for the individual to be himself. Creativity is not a specialized activity but a feature of life and total living.'<sup>150</sup>

The importance of creativity, play, and art in object relations does not lose sight of the importance of the imaginary and the symbolic in the interpenetration of internal and external realms. Its thinking comes back to a

realm of potential and of transition that does not reduce all thinking to psychoanalytic explanation or interpretation. It builds upon the symbiosis of the imaginary and the representational for ideas, forms, and objects. It focuses on transitional realms that allow for a set of generative or appropriated possibilities, that include the rational, and that alter the predictable, or prescriptive. Despite considering the critical relevance of psychotic and neurotic losses of reality and their substitutions, Green, who champions Winnicott, says '...outer reality does not seem to me limited to objectively perceived objects.'<sup>151</sup> In psychoanalytic terms the work of Winnicott specifically, does not reduce its terms to interpretation, or to fantasy, though clearly a psychological knowledge is centrally important as well.

The insights of object relations broadly focus on the significance of child development, and its drives towards their parents. It is effective in focusing on drives and their distinguishment - it has made contributions to drive theory, and the building up of a strong and separated super-ego. Simplistically speaking object relations highlights narcissism and ego development rather than processes of fragmentation and of the id. It is not the psychologically reconstructed child, but the mythical child that comes to be located within a field of representation and that builds upon the real and the Imaginary as a generative impulse. Object Relations focuses on the realm of

the relational or the interpersonal that facilitates and enriches growing up. Arguably, it overcomes pitfalls of the Lacanian through dimensionality, objects, and spaces, outside of the mirror. At its broadest it can look to external contexts, to ideas about creativity, and different cultural environments. The central questions remains - to what extent can it develop a realm that might consider particular contexts through particular theories that are not reducible to the psychoanalytic, in some similar ways to Winnicott's thinking?

Yet it is not clear to what extent ideas in object relations can be reconsidered with lived realms. Greenberg and Mitchell say that attempts to tap different dimensions of human experience to the drive – Sandler's struggle for a cohesive and integrated self, or Guntrip's utopian strain 'as the basis for a spontaneous, joyful, and creative self' - have been, within the psychoanalytic community, unsuccessful.<sup>152</sup> A set of limitations with a sociological development of object relations therefore would marginalise, arguably, what Greenberg and Mitchell call the creative and rich interplay of ideas within a broader context of psychoanalytic concern. Conversely how far are lived realms particular to the terms of their contexts or disciplines, for example facets of geography and the psychoanalytic, and how far are they a re-casting of an attempt to find a realm of equivalence in human agency with lived dimensions and identifications in the external world.

There have been a few attempts to develop object relations theories into art and cultural realms, although not specifically by object relation's theorists. Richard Kuhns *Psychoanalytic Theory of Art* is one such attempt. However, criticism of his account would focus on a danger of replicating modernists notions of art and culture as essentially unchanging provinces. It could also focus on a prioritisation of the masculine in its social and symbolic reading, and, given a traditional emphasis on the maternal in object relations, raises the complexity of a mis-match in Kuhns theoretical development through the paternal. Similarly Peter Fuller in *Art and Psychoanalysis* considers the contribution of object relations theory - specifically Milner's work and Winnicott's ideas about art, potential space - as well as an understanding of art and dialectical materialism. Although Fuller is criticised from an art theoretical and anthropological perspectives for a psychological essentialism.<sup>153</sup>

*Psychoanalytic Theory of Art* attempts to develop an object relations theory as a basis for a theory of art and culture, in part, through the super-ego or ego-ideal. He says that the link between ego ideal and social life are not developed in Freud's writing - 'Insofar as these feelings and actions are integral to social life, Freud did not relate his theory of objects and his theory of culture,'<sup>154</sup> He mentions there is only a brief reflection by Freud about the



ego ideal in political life and focuses on thinking about an object of masculine ego-ideals. Freud mentions for example 'The ego ideal opens up an important avenue for the understanding of group psychology. In addition to the individual side, this ideal has a social side...It binds not only a person's narcissistic libido, but also a considerable amount of homosexual libido, which is in this way turned back into ego.'<sup>155</sup> In some ways it links in with Blum and Nast's highlighting of masculine origins. Furthermore while highlighting the importance of Freud's thought Kuhns mentions 'But it is a brief observation, leaves out of account the vast range of objects sustained and responded to by the individual in the course of a life.'<sup>156</sup> Essentially he attempts to broaden a field of thinking about art and culture through object relations theory. In some ways his thinking might also be compared with comments by Blum and Nast about psychoanalysis and a marginalisation of masculinity and social origins.

Winnicott's work about transitional objects, is examined where in an expanded object relations theory he develops; 'objects as works of art, and objects as complement to subject, or self.'<sup>157</sup> Kuhns writes 'It is especially in the domains of art and culture that a psychoanalytic theory of objects can help to see the developmental complexities of the relationship between individual and objects.'<sup>158</sup> He introduces a tradition of objects, and, even an 'object-past of the objects,'<sup>159</sup> where there is a history of the individual,

including unconscious processes, and a history of the object.<sup>160</sup> The significance of Winnicott's use of the transitional object is also highlighted though he thinks about 'cultural objects that have an enduring presence function as transitional objects...'<sup>161</sup> Kuhns work is therefore already an cultural interpretation of object relations theory. Nevertheless he writes that 'the first sense of "to enact" draws attention to a social function of enactments. And he gives the tradition of Navajo sand painting, saying '...its *production* is an event of a cultural kind that has reasons for repetition.'<sup>162</sup> In this sense it is a modification of the art *and* cultural object.

Kuhns explores the broader terms of enactments with 'realities already partially known in nature and in culture, yet realities that are further explored in the individual enactment.'<sup>163</sup> These explore further 'representational action that has positive political consequences.'<sup>164</sup> And in order to develop positive and developmental consequences. Freud with uncertainty considers the developmental and representational significance of death in society, for example in 'Our Attitudes towards Death.'<sup>165</sup> He also in 'The Future of an Illusion' considers psychical values, psychical assets, and even 'the psychical inventory of a civilisation.'<sup>166</sup> Freud in a sense develops a diagnostic account of civilisation that focuses on the inevitable trade-off of repression in human nature and its consequences. He highlights psychological perspectives that do not consider differences in civilizations or cultures, and suggest

psychological insights that underly them. However the first difficulty of Kuhns' reading of culture is, despite ordinary levels of scale, within the context of art history, his thinking about civilisations, traditions and origins, can touch on distinctly modernist overtones.

Kuhns develops a reading of Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*. It introduces some of the methodological complexities of developing the psychoanalytic with the historical and cultural, objects and individuals with collective actions. For example he explores the relevance of tragedy and of social enactments in interesting ways. Yet the second broader difficulty with his reading is that it is a particular reading of the symbolic and of the masculine ego-ideal that has insights, but also significant limitations for a reading of feminine psychology, alterity, or psychosexual hybridity. It also fixes upon specific themes, such as tragedy or forms of social repression that become its exclusive focus. Furthermore, and most problematically, his development of object relations theory into art and culture through a reconsidered masculine ego-ideal, does not fit with object relations theory's close relations with the maternal as its primary realm.

Other specific areas of concern about a potential set of connections, or realm of equivalence, with the lived and their reflexive purchase include: in terms of thinking about a realm of the body, there are hardly any references to

'body' in Greenburg and Mitchell's book. Though there are to body parts, and ideas associated with them.<sup>167</sup> In highly simplistic terms the body is described in terms of self development or relational terms rather than in the Freudian or drive theories complexities of desire. The importance of child development in object relations usually focuses on the boy, and can emphasise a maternal ideal. Object relations focuses heavily on the relationship with the mother - problematically it focuses on drives more than on theories of sexuality or desire that has implications for the psychology of women.<sup>168</sup> Given Burgin's reference to Freud about the complexities of oedipal conflict and the father, does object relations evade not gender conflict per se but the significance of activity and passivity in terms of its associated ideas. It is not clear what the theoretical tools are for considering both maternal and paternal agency, or the individual specificity of ideas associated with them? <sup>169</sup> Relations with the father are marginalised or, more complexly, the father is incorporated into fantasies of the mother (Klein). It would be important to ask to what extent object relations theory's emphasis on the maternal is also a movement away from complexities of a paternal, or masculine realm. Finally, a reflexive question would simply ask, as it does about the uncanny, to what extent are objects, and identifications confused with behaviours or ideas associated with them?

### **Creative Tensions and Fractures in the lived**

A broad and non-resolveable realm of the psychoanalytic and art theoretical that complicates an equivalence with the lived is thereby important as well. Object relations theory highlights some scope for a development of its ideas about objects and spaces outside of a traditional aesthetic. But it also suggests that the tensions and unresolveable fractures of object relations within itself or within other modes of the psychoanalytic afford sets of tensions for exploring specific concepts further on different terms. This facet would explore problems of mis-alignment and develops possible stresses in apparent equivalences, for example between objects and behaviours, or dimensionality and embodiment. The reflexive becomes again a primary emphasis. Aspects of dimensionality are problematised whereby the extent of inconsequential or imaginary elements are either explored or reconfigured. To some extent it reconfigures a more essentialist psychological (or imaginary) strand in problems of equivalence through fractures in object relations, in the Freudian, or the works of Green and Laplanche, each with its own set of emphases. This would ask what the critical purchase of disrupting problems of equivalence is as well how to explore its avenues and criteria. For example differentiating Lacanian concepts from Lefebvre's generated significant discursive insights. Lefebvre's ideas about space were re-examined in terms of women's agency. It might be asked that if women's agency was found to be complicated in Lefebvre's work how might

psychoanalytic realms re-consider the lived in different terms of, for example, embodiment or men's agency? Blum and Nast examine the question in terms of sexual identity, social origins and masculinity, and non-phallic realms.

In *Psychoanalysis and Culture*, Minsky writes: 'In Lacan's theory, our identification with the actual father as the symbolic representative of culture is replaced by our identification with the meanings and conventions of language, what he calls the 'place of the father' rather than the actual father.'<sup>170</sup> While in Freud's theory 'the fathers role is central in that he stands as the third term of the triangle symbolizing the world of 'not the mother', or 'not me', that is culture.'<sup>171</sup> Desire, sexuality, difference and the father are a source of identity in Freudian theory.<sup>172</sup> 'Object relations theory, in contrast to Freud's theory and Lacan's development of it, makes the mother's rather than the father's role central to the construction of our identity, although nowadays modern object relations therapists consider the fathers role to be also very important.'<sup>173</sup> About Lacan Minsky acknowledges '...in focusing so much on signification, [Lacan] has denied the force and validity of embodied experience, including intuitive, empathic ways of knowing. Object relations psychoanalytic writers such as Winnicott, Klein and Bion, in particular...would argue that, although we 'speak' ourselves in language which pre-exists us, we are not all inter-changeable.'<sup>174</sup>

For Lacan it is repressed desire for the mother which drives us. In Freudian terms the embodied father is central. 'For Freud, our early identification with the father at the end of the oedipal crisis installs culture at the centre of our being.'<sup>175</sup> The father for Freud symbolizes the world beyond the mother's body. For example he 'represents the reality principle, the boundary which permanently blocks and resists the child's omnipotent phantasy of total possession of the mother (the pleasure principle).'<sup>176</sup> If the child fails to internalize this cultural block on its dreams of omnipotence and perfection the child may not be able to distinguish phantasies of non-separation from demands of the real.

Burgin develops his thinking about the father to a certain extent within the parameters of a Lacanian father. However he also looks to Freud and hybridity, group psychology and ego-ideals, and to facets of Klein. He considers complexities in terms of sexual drives and hybridity in oedipal conflict writing that the Oedipus complex is rarely encountered in simple form, though it is a useful frame. Referring to Laplanche and Pontalis, they suggest a range of hybrid cases, of negative and positive forms within Oedipus complexes.<sup>177</sup> In psychosexual terms Freud considered the terms masculine and feminine too conventional that to some extent problematise masculine and feminine realms of agency themselves and allows for the

recognition of mechanisms in the construction of the subject, such as paranoid or schizoid mechanisms.

Significantly, Burgin highlights the relevance of the ego-ideal, as Kuhns does, though he does so in different ways. Furthermore it will be argued there is a range of thought about the ego-ideal, and its connections, in Freud's thought. Ego-ideals are raised in several different contexts, and it highlights another productive realm of contested equivalences that might be explored. Nevertheless Burgin writes social law demands parents are given up as objects of libidinal interest. Object-cathexis are given up and replaced by identifications. The authority of the parents, though frequently the father, for example is introjected and forms the nucleus of a super-ego. It is to this figure, depending on the experience of the father that includes some level of idealisation, that the narcissistic ego imperfectly aspires, and forms the ego-ideal. Burgin discusses the difficulties of an identification *with* an ego ideal, and the ways in which an idealized imago of the object is invested in the ego. Concentrating on its individual anxieties he mentions two modes of primary identificatory processes - what Freud variously called 'totemic', 'melancholic', or more commonly 'narcissistic' identification, though each has specific nuances. The other mode being hysterical identification. Freud says the narcissistic is the older of the two. These are developed in terms of identification between more than two people or of resemblances of a



common element that remains in the unconscious. Burgin for example discusses identity principally in terms of the overlooked in history, vision, psychosis, and processes of group psychology.

In reference to Freud, Burgin considers group psychology in terms of hysterical or narcissistic identification, one set of his ideas about ego-ideals having relevance for social ties or identification with a leader – for example exempting them from blame or being devoted to them. He refers to Freud's 1921 work *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*.<sup>178</sup> He emphasizes ego defence from inner dangers projected into the external world in his ideas about group psychology and identity.<sup>179</sup> This includes the collapsing of questions of individual identity. Yet these psychological issues develop into questions of belonging and membership that have consequences for histories, such as ethnic cleansing.<sup>180</sup> In simple terms, Burgin explores the complexity of the overlapping of discursive strata, and the ways in which the collapsing of individual identities are formed into questions of belonging.

Freud's focus on ego-ideals is more psychologically nuanced than Burgin's specific contexts of thought about them. Freud's interpretation of ego ideals can be broadened into a variety of ideas and contexts, and not only in terms of group identification. In Freudian terms, it generates a condition for repression in the ego and for the make-up, or management of, internal

factors, expressed in terms of internal and external aims. For example Freud considers the formation of a scenario where hostile forces seem to be bearing down from the outside as a consequence of a censorial conscience.<sup>181</sup> About the ego ideal he distinguishes sublimation and the drives from idealisation and objects - for example in terms of the latter, where the object can be over-valued, and he tentatively separates out ego-libido and object libido.<sup>182</sup>

For example Freud asserts that the early super-ego, and its conflicts in character formation, in the ego, id and super-ego are shaped by our relationship to parental authority, though normally the father.<sup>183</sup> In simple terms this has significance for understanding fears, and the management or rejection of drive-impulses (either aggressive drives or sexual drives or a mixture of both). Controversially in many senses, its psychical formation can contribute to notions of morality and conscience-based fears. It can contribute to ideas about reparation, trauma, or group psychology. An ego-ideal would have unrealistically high levels of expectation and as Burgin says is something the ego 'will never succeed in emulating...'<sup>184</sup> In highly simple terms, layers of morality and conscience, of reparation, group or social psychology or hostile environments, may also, in psychoanalytic terms, be about conflicts in the individual. A focus on ego-ideals can develop scope for ambivalent and re-creative readings of its potential strains that are not only about an external or historical identification.

As an aside, in terms of a consideration of super-egos and ego-ideals it is interesting that Rhythmanalysis, the title of Lefebvre's last work, is taken from a term used by Bachelard, who suggests its basis in sublimation. Bachelard says 'Rhythmanalysis is the complete antithesis of Psychoanalysis...' and he 'suggests a lyric myth for rhythmanalysis which could well be called the Orpheus complex...The Orpheus complex would be the exact antithesis of the Oedipus complex,' though he states further thought is also essential.<sup>185</sup> In another essay Bachelard carefully distinguishes between the Freudian super-ego and his notion of 'self-surveillance,' as a kind of rhythmanalysis, and as a 'correctly psychoanalysed *superego*.' He says this is 'not a source of suffering but rather of instruction.'<sup>186</sup> For Bachelard idealisation is important.<sup>187</sup> Although Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis is not the same as Bachelard's, how far a 'correctly analysed super-ego,' might be thought about in different ways given a range of thought about the super-ego here is an interesting question and link.

To what extent layers of Lefebvre's 'total man', or the centrality of Lefebvre's own dialogue with a vision of the crucified sun that Elden describes as one of the most important moments in Lefebvre's life, might be reconsidered in individual and psychoanalytic terms is unclear. Elden says in Lefebvre's work the cross 'represents alienation and repression—'<sup>188</sup> or 'The

crucified sun is the symbol of division, humiliation, failure and hopelessness...'<sup>189</sup> Lefebvre refers in his ideas about a radical romanticism to notions of the possible / impossible as the relationship between a child and his father.<sup>190</sup> In terms of men's agency, Ross, for example, in part considers Fanon and Lefebvre in terms of ideas about a new man in a chapter called 'New Men and the death of Men' (see previous chapter).<sup>191</sup>

Contexts that might fracture the lived are not only about ego-ideals, but generate an example about the complexity of impulses towards realms of equivalence or as a facet of external drives, objects, and identifications. There is also the centrality of the aggressive or death drives in Freudian theory that to some extent can also be separated from aspects of sexuality, and in some terms at least separated out from external identifications. Psychological aspects can also be differentiated from social and political ties. Conversely however nor is this realm necessarily only about the individual. For example how might the psychoanalytic consider the shaping of death drives or aggressive drives in individual and collective realms? What about demands from the id or the unconscious? What the origins of the demands of the id may be, as opposed to the super-ego, is perhaps unanswerable, but it can complicate the relevance of notions and values of individual and collective psychology. Nonetheless the simple point is that fractures of equivalence explore the lived in a range of contexts, and it is the reflexive nuances that

become central. Essentially the importance of clarity about the underlying concepts and emphases of a guiding rationale and its direction becomes crucial. Paradoxically problems of equivalence can map both more essentialist processes and mutable individual-and-collective questions.

### **Conclusion.**

The chapter has highlighted and differentiated a set of connections through Victor Burgin that brought together ideas about Lefebvre and psychoanalysis. It has introduced a realm of mis-alignments and problems of equivalence with the lived and the importance of psychoanalytic concepts about drives, objects and identifications. That is concepts that are not reducible to a summative psychoanalytic theory. A central problem is that while Burgin's mode of study outside of a traditional aesthetic is original and complex, there are specific difficulties with it in terms of its references and emphases to Lefebvre that do more than just re-consider Lefebvre. Furthermore a Lacanian development of the psychoanalytic in an art theoretical enquiry synthesises the inflections or insights from each psychoanalytic school or theorist. The chapter argues that facets of the Lacanian, object relations, the Freudian, and contemporary psychoanalytic writers are fundamentally important to separate out, or at least distinguish. An interesting set of contexts and problems begin to emerge by considering aspects of the lived together with a range of psychoanalytic ideas. However

the chapter does not present a single theoretical resolution either, but attempts to chart specific strengths and weaknesses, or layers that might be differentiated. Burgin and Lefebvre's work both examine intractable problems outside of a traditional aesthetic in different ways.

Burgin's Lacanian development of Lefebvre, it is important to stress recontextualises Lefebvre's work with specific implications that are important to contrast. In a reconsideration of Lefebvre's work, it is the differentiation of Lefebvre from Lacan that is highlighted – that is contexts and concepts such as agency, dimensionality, and produced difference that differentiate a Lacanian mirror in important ways. In Lefebvre and Benjamin, it is the creative inter-play of contexts and objects, agencies and histories that are outside of the individual artist that are a central facet of its guiding rationale. The ordinariness of the lived moment, or facets of the everyday, can be relatively straight-forwardly contrasted from Burgin's psychical contexts that examines a realm outside of a traditional aesthetic in different ways, though both in terms of problems of equivalence or aspects of power have strengths and weaknesses.

The chapter claims that facets of object relations come closer in interesting ways to Lefebvrian realms of the lived than do connections between Burgin and Lefebvre. This includes realms of creativity, of transitional objects, and

also of social ties. It includes transformation through internal and external realms. Yet while the schools of radical alternative in object relations come close to Lefebvre's thought - Fromm's for example - they do not however actually meet, nor are they an equivalent. But nonetheless the kinds of non-resolveable tensions and insights its field of connections raises are complex and insightful for a realm outside of a traditional aesthetic. A focus on object relations and the lived can develop, in terms of its strengths at least, Winnicott's concepts of creativity, transitional objects and space, and cultural fields. It explores the possibility, simply, of particular theories that develop in particular contexts that are not necessarily reducible to the psychoanalytic either. Rather resonances of the psychoanalytic for considering re-creative contexts that include creative values or a good enough environment emerge.

Paradoxically, the chapter found important scope for a carefully articulated art theoretical or non-resolveable realm across methodologies, where the impulses to find a realm of equivalence in objects and drives, identifications and histories with the lived are recontextualised as an important, or creative, mode of study. Object relations theory was not a monolithic field but there were also important tensions and fractures in it about individual and social values. To what extent a realm of problems of equivalence with its emphasis on environment can be incorporated into a creative and social field is an important though perhaps contingent and not absolute question. Differences

within the psychoanalytic community, through Freud, object relations, and contemporary psychoanalytic writers means the rich interplay of tensions affords scope for the disruption of problems of equivalence in dimensional realms as well as in more essentialist or individual terms. The intractability of the problems and their contexts outside of a traditional aesthetic does highlight the value of creative and reflexive, rather than purely theoretical and external realms. Nonetheless the differentiation of different guiding rationales in the chapter comes up with different strengths and weaknesses of each in terms of how to think about possible connections and productive tensions in the lived.



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### **Footnotes: Burgin and Psychoanalysis**

<sup>1</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture*; Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p.15, Stuart Hall, edited from transcript of talk given at Symposium

"Fantasy/Identity/Politics," Institute of Contemporary Arts, 16 February 1989, in The Center for Cultural Studies Newsletter, Santa Cruz, University of California, (Winter 1990).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid* p.208.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid* p.68.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid* p.151.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* p.30.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* p.107 from Laplanche, J. (1989), *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, translated by D.Macey; Cambridge Massachusetts and Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* p.68.

<sup>9</sup> See for example 'Fear and the Drives', in Freud, S. (2003), *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1940], translated by H. Ragg-Kirkby, introduction by M. Bowie; London: Penguin Books.

<sup>10</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*: p.240.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* see p.242 for fuller description.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid* p.245.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid* p.243, from Freud, S, *The Ego and the Id*, Standard Edition, Vol. 19; p.29.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid* p.95.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid* p.95-96.

<sup>16</sup> Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England; Harvard University Press; p.38.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid* p.70.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid* p.71.

<sup>19</sup> Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*; p.70.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid* p.24. See chapter 2 for the developments of drive theory.

<sup>21</sup> See also comments by Caldwell, L, 'Interview with André Green', in 'Psychoanalysis and Culture', *New Formations*, Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics, No.26 Autumn 1995; especially pps. 25-26

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* p.x.,.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid* and see also Laplanche, J. (1989), *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*.

<sup>24</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*; p.28.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid* p.28.

### **Burgin's Development of Lefebvre-Lacan.**

<sup>26</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*: p.30.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid* p.30.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* p.30.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid* p.30, Burgin referring to Lefebvre, H. (1986), *The Production of Space*; p.413.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid* p.30.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid* p.30 and 151.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* p.151.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid* p.31.

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid* p.30/31.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* p.23. Similar to Deutsche in terms of her differentiation of Dialectical Material theories that marginalise, or pre-determine, theories of representation from ones that consider aspects of art, spatiality, and politics. See for example 'Boys Town' and 'Men in Space' in Deutsche, R. (1998), *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*; Cambridge Massachusetts, London England: MIT Press.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid* p.27 from Lefebvre, H (1986), 'The Production of Space' p.39.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid* p.28.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* p.47.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid* p.47.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid* p.155.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid* p.99.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid* p.99.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid* p.99.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid* p.102.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid* pps.146-149.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid* p.151.

<sup>47</sup> For a cross-reference see also Bachelard, G, 'The Dialectics of Inside and Outside' in Bachelard, G. (1994), *The Poetics of Space*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1964], translated by M. Jolas, with a new foreword by R.Stilgoe; Boston: Beacon Press. Lefebvre briefly refers to Bachelard in *The Production of Space*.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid* p.147.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid* p.149, from Lefebvre, H. (1986), *The Production of Space*; p.93.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid* p.149.

<sup>51</sup> 'The Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities,' in Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday life*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1992], translated by Elden, S, and Moore, G; London and New York: Continuum; p.89.

<sup>52</sup> 'The Rhythmanalytical Project,' in *ibid*; p.81.

<sup>53</sup> Introduction by Lebas and Koffman, p.33 in Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*, translated and edited by Eleonore Kofman, E. and Elizabeth Lebas, E. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK and Cambridge Massachusetts, USA.; p.33.

<sup>54</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*: p.36.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid* p.36.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid* p.36.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid* p.36.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid* p.36.

### **Unravelling Lefebvre from Lacan**

<sup>59</sup> Blum, V. and Nast, H. (1996), 'Where's the Difference? The heterosexualisation of alterity in Henri Lefebvre and Jacques Lacan,' in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 14 (4), pps.559-80.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid* p.563.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid* p.564.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid* p.564.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid* p.564.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid* p.565.

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- <sup>65</sup> *ibid* p.567
- <sup>66</sup> *ibid* p.567.
- <sup>67</sup> *ibid* p.567
- <sup>68</sup> *ibid* p.568 from Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1974], translated by N. Donaldson-Smith, preface by M. Trebitsch and postscript by D. Harvey; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing; p.162.
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid* p.568
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid* p.568 from Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.185.
- <sup>71</sup> *ibid* p.568.
- <sup>72</sup> *ibid* p.565.
- <sup>73</sup> *ibid* p.565.
- <sup>74</sup> *ibid* p.565.
- <sup>75</sup> *ibid* p.562 Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.30. See also p.408.
- <sup>76</sup> *ibid* p.563 from Lefebvre, H. (1991), *The Production of Space*; p.117.
- <sup>77</sup> *ibid* p.576.
- <sup>78</sup> *ibid* p.576.
- <sup>79</sup> *ibid* p.578.
- <sup>80</sup> *ibid* p.577.
- <sup>81</sup> *ibid* p.577.
- <sup>82</sup> *ibid* p.577.
- <sup>83</sup> *ibid* all quotes from pps.569-571.
- <sup>84</sup> *ibid* p.561-562, referring to Lefebvre, H (1991), *The Production of Space*; pps. 35-36.
- <sup>85</sup> *ibid* p.564. Brenkman, J. (1993), *Straight, Male, Modern: A Cultural Critique of Psychoanalysis*; New York: Routledge.
- <sup>86</sup> *ibid* p.564.
- <sup>87</sup> *ibid* p.572.
- <sup>88</sup> *ibid* p.574.
- <sup>89</sup> *ibid* p.578.
- <sup>90</sup> *ibid* p.576.
- <sup>91</sup> *ibid* p.576.
- <sup>92</sup> The thing doing the flattening through written language is a vertical force expressed in phallic terms and symbolizes force, male fertility, masculine violence, and phallic brutality. This direction of force and agency Lefebvre calls the phallic formant of abstract space. 'In other words, for Lefebvre, the phallus is the godlike verticality of force and agency that capitalism assumes in order to signify the world in ways that further its own goals.'
- <sup>93</sup> *ibid* p.578.

### **Object Relations and the Lived**

- <sup>94</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*: p.31
- <sup>95</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writing Cities*; p.29. See also Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*, edited by S. Elden, E. Lebas, and E. Kofman; New York and London: Continuum; pps.47-49 where he discusses Freud.
- <sup>96</sup> *ibid* p.29.
- <sup>97</sup> *ibid* p.29, footnote 17.

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<sup>98</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*, London and New York; Continuum; p.22.

<sup>99</sup> See Pile, S., 'Psychoanalysis and Space', in *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity*, London and New York, Routledge; pps145-169, conclusion to part II. Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writing Cities*; footnote 17, p.29. Or as Blum and Nast (1996) write, search the index pages of *The Production of Space* for terms, like ego, narcissism, phallic, maternal, desire, unconscious etc.

<sup>100</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2004), *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1992], translated by S. Elden and G. Moore; London and New York: Continuum; p.19.

<sup>101</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.38. From Lefebvre, H. (1986), *Le Retour de La Dialectique. 12 mots clés*, Messidor, Éditions Sociales; p.47.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid* p.39.

<sup>103</sup> For a different reading about Freud and the clinical impulse see Derrida, J. (1966), 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' in Derrida, J. (2002), *Writing and Difference*; London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>104</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key writings*; p.47.

<sup>105</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.79.

<sup>106</sup> Caldwell, L., 'An interview with André Green' in *New Formations*, 'Psychoanalysis and Culture,' Number 26, Autumn 1995; p.18. Full text pps.15-35.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid*, p.18. Green says many of his pupils left Lacan in 1963 because the 1953 split was really Lacan against his opponents.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid* p.18.

<sup>109</sup> Freud, S. (2003), *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1940], translated by H. Ragg-Kirkby with introduction by M. Bowie; London: Penguin Books; p.xii.

<sup>110</sup> Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*; p.11/12.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid* p.13/14.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid* p.14.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid* p.14.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid* p.14.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid* p.14.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid* p.13.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid* p.13.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid* p.13.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid* p.3.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid* pps.3-4.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid* p.45.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid*, for example that some psychoanalytic theorists have retained the term object and object relations but have eliminated the concept of the drive in the classical Freudian sense (Fairbairn 1952 and Guntrip 1969 for example). That '(o)ther theories which stress the role of the object and which hold that they deal with the problems of object relations *are* drive theories, (for example Jacobsen 1964 and Kernberg 1976). Object relations then refer to theories that do *and* do not accept Freudian libido theory.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid* p.19.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid* p.4.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid* p.2/3.

- <sup>126</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*; pps.261-262 from Winnicott, D.W. (1982), 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena', in *Playing and Reality*, Harmondsworth and New York, Penguin.
- <sup>127</sup> *ibid* p.262, from Winnicott, D.W. (1982), *Playing and Reality*; p.6.
- <sup>128</sup> Winnicott, D.W. (1971), *Playing and Reality*, London and New York, Routledge; p.67.
- <sup>129</sup> *ibid* p.68.
- <sup>130</sup> *ibid* see for example p.106-107.
- <sup>131</sup> *ibid* p.70 and p.153, see also pps.147-149 about idealism.
- <sup>132</sup> Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*; p.220.
- <sup>133</sup> *ibid* p.145.
- <sup>134</sup> *ibid* p.80.
- <sup>135</sup> *ibid* p.80.
- <sup>136</sup> *ibid* p.380.
- <sup>137</sup> *ibid* pps.400-404.
- <sup>138</sup> *ibid* p.402.
- <sup>139</sup> *ibid* p.404.
- <sup>140</sup> *ibid* p.404, p.408.
- <sup>141</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.175.
- <sup>142</sup> Marcuse could be compared with Lefebvre, though he does not write from a context of object relations. A comparison with Marcuse would reflect his idiosyncratic positioning within psychoanalysis. There are also difficulties. Mitchell, J. (1994), in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*; [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1974]; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, contrasts more radical psychoanalytic contexts with ideas about human society and Feminism. She includes the work of R.D. Laing, W. Reich and Freud. However she differentiates the significance of Marcuse's ideological contexts from her thinking, p.410, p.412. A comparison of Lefebvre and Marcuse would be appropriate in terms of the Frankfurt School.
- <sup>143</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.172, from Lefebvre, H, *La Somme et le reste*, reprint of first edition, 1959; Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck; p.152.
- <sup>144</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*; p.166.
- <sup>145</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.173, from Lefebvre, H, *La Somme et Le Reste*; p.653, and Lefebvre, H. (2003), *Key Writings*; p.174.
- <sup>146</sup> Caldwell, L, 'An interview with André Green' in *New Formations*, 'Psychoanalysis and Culture,' Number 26, Autumn 1995; p.19-29. See also the reprint of a chapter by Winnicott, D.W. 'The Psychology of Madness: A Contribution from Psychoanalysis', in *ibid*; pps 45-53.
- <sup>147</sup> *ibid* p.xi, and p.18.
- <sup>148</sup> See for example Winnicott, D.W. (1971), *Therapeutic Consultations in Child Psychiatry*, London; The Hogarth Press, and The Institute of Psycho-analysis.
- <sup>149</sup> Green, A. (2005), *Play and Reflection in Donald Winnicott's Writing*, The Donald Winnicott Memorial Lecture by André Green; London: Karnac; p.8.
- <sup>150</sup> *ibid* p.22.
- <sup>151</sup> *ibid* p.8.
- <sup>152</sup> Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*; p.370-372.

<sup>153</sup> For a critique of Fuller, P. see for example Howell, S, 'Art and Meaning' in Hiller, S. (ed.) (1991), *The Myth of Primitivism*; London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>154</sup> Kuhns, R. (1983), *Psychoanalytic Theory of Art: A Philosophy of Art on Developmental Principles*, New York: Columbia University Press; p.52.

<sup>155</sup> *ibid* p.52, from Freud, S, *On Narcissism*, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol.13: The Hogarth Press; p.90.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid* p.52.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid* p.62.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid* p.52.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid* p.21

<sup>160</sup> *ibid* p.21

<sup>161</sup> *ibid* p.62.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid* p.56.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid* p.80.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid* p.105 in reference to representational action. For a different reading see also Bowie, M. 'Memory and Desire in Freud's Civilisation and its Discontents', in *New Formations*, 'Psychoanalysis and Culture;' pps.1-14.

<sup>165</sup> 'Would it not be better to give death the place in reality and in our thoughts which it is due, and to give a little more prominence to the unconscious attitude towards death which we have hitherto so carefully suppressed?' He takes a step back and a step forward 'This hardly seems an advance to higher achievement, but rather in some respects a backward step – regression; but it has the advantage of taking truth more into account, and of making life more tolerable for us once again. To tolerate life remains, after all, the first duty of all living beings. Illusion becomes valueless if it makes this harder for us.' Freud, S, 'Our Attitudes towards Death' in *Civilisation, Society and Religion*, Volume 12, Penguin; p.89.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid*, p.192 or p.193.

<sup>167</sup> Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*; 'In simple terms, needs, bodily events, temperaments, and other biological factors operate within a context of an interactive matrix (p.220). The body tends to become a medium of exchange rather than generating independent psychological motives. 'The difference between the approach to the body in relational model and drive model theories is not in terms of *whether* the body is important, but *in what way*. Bodily needs are not viewed, as they are by drive structure theorists, as the originator of important *psychological* intentions and meanings' (p.226).

<sup>168</sup> Mitchell, J. (1994), *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*; [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1974]; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books; p.231.

<sup>169</sup> See more recently for example pages 181-205 in 'Beyond sexual difference: clinical individuality and same-sex cross-generation relations in the creation of feminine and masculine,' by Chodorow, N. in Matthis, I. (ed) (2004), *Dialogues on Sexuality, Gender, and Psychoanalysis*. Karnac Books.

### **Creative Tensions and Fractures in the Lived.**

<sup>170</sup> Minsky, R. (1998), *Psychoanalysis and Culture: Contemporary States of Mind*, Polity Press; p.7.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid* p.13.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid* p.11.

- <sup>173</sup> ibid p.13.
- <sup>174</sup> ibid p.5/6.
- <sup>175</sup> ibid p.133.
- <sup>176</sup> ibid p.134.
- <sup>177</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/different Spaces*; p.244.
- <sup>178</sup> ibid pps.246-247.
- <sup>179</sup> While Freud focuses on developmental stages, Burgin says Lacan points out that language and images are there before birth and 'that this ever-present environment of representations exerts its own determinations on identity at each successive organic developmental stage' (p250). In simple terms Burgin's ideas about identity are worked through Lacan's mirror.
- <sup>180</sup> ibid p.265-266.
- <sup>181</sup> See 'On the Introduction of Narcissism' in Freud, S, (2003), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and other Writings*, Penguin; p.25.
- <sup>182</sup> ibid p.22, pps.22-30 for the ego ideal discussion.
- <sup>183</sup> See Chapter 4, 'Fear and the Drives' in Freud, S, *An Outline to Psychoanalysis*.
- <sup>184</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces*; p.245, he also says quoting Freud '...the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object cathexis and that it contains the history of those object choices.' This is, Burgin says, for Lacan, the most far reaching of Freud's discussion about human identity,' ibid p.244, from Freud, S, *The ego and the id*, Standard Edition, vol. 19, p.29.
- <sup>185</sup> Jones, M, M, (1991), *Gaston Bachelard: Subversive Humanist*; Texts and Readings, The University of Wisconsin Press; p.71.
- <sup>186</sup> ibid p.150-151.
- <sup>187</sup> Bachelard suggests 'Sublimation is not always the denial of a desire; it is not always introduced as sublimation *against* instincts. It can be a sublimation *for* an ideal. And states classic psychoanalysis underestimates the role played by idealization. In Bachelard, G. (1983), *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, [1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1942], translated by E. Farrel; Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications.
- <sup>187</sup> Jones, M. (1991), *Gaston Bachelard: Subversive Humanist*; p.150-151.
- <sup>188</sup> Elden, S. (2004), *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*; p.171. See also Shields, R, (1999), *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*; pps.8-18, sub-section on Le soleil crucifié: The crucified sun.
- <sup>189</sup> ibid p.171.
- <sup>190</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1995), *Introduction to Modernity*; p.385. 'The father is the *possible impossibility* which is revealed through the child's present moment and transfixes it; he is what the child will become...The father is what is nearest and what is furthest away, intimate and inaccessible, the self and the other, threatening it and making it fruitful.'
- <sup>191</sup> Ross, K. (1996), *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Re-ordering of French Culture*, MIT Press, An October Book, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England; see pps.158-163. 'Henri Lefebvre too held Marx's concept of the "total man" to be the strongest critical weapon against the reduced "economic man" created out of the reified, instrumental relations of Western, Bourgeois, market society.'

## **Conclusion**

### **Conclusion and the different parts of the thesis**

- **How the thesis is pursued**
- **Reconsidering Cobra achievements, events and activities**
- **Lefebvre and Cobra-Lefebvre**
- **Why re-consider Lefebvre-Cobra?**
- **Recommendations for Cobra, post Cobra and Lefebvre**
- **The critical limitations of Burgin and the lived**
- **Near Connections and unresolved fractures in the psychoanalytic**
- **Conclusion**
- ***Footnotes***



## **Conclusion**

### **How the thesis is pursued**

The thesis pursues a set of tendencies and concepts across Cobra, Lefebvre, and psychoanalysis. This centres round the unfolding of fully lived moments and the differentiation of a plurality of productive tensions. It connects with ordinary contexts and with creative practises where particular opportunities, actions, and alternative possibilities rather than a broad set of ideals in a utopian sense are re-configured. The theorisation of the moment, as well as qualities of, to some extent, creative vision and values of the imagination in the everyday, is its formative outline. Given historical and thematic fields of fully lived moments, the thesis argues for a set of ideas as well as a set of potential re-considerations about them.

By orchestrating a set of dynamic relationships, a space is created that goes against the grain of conventional political theory, philosophy and art history. An intellectual space develops which, because of its emphasis on actions and good-enough environments for example is resolved only to the extent it can be. The thesis looks to collaborative artworks, architecture, Lefebvre's philosophical and political theory, and resonances in the psychoanalytic. Effectively ideas about prospective constructions and theoretical connections are brought together. In thematic terms the thesis builds up and thinks

through the strengths and weaknesses of a set of productive connections and **methodological complexities about the lived outside a traditional aesthetic.** (delete - rounds ideas off by differentiating what the lived is not. In terms of the latter, that...cannot be reduced to Burgin's...) This includes for examples **the strengths and weaknesses of Cobra's art work and ideas, Lefebvre's dimensional and radical romantic enquiry, and Burgin's spatial and psychical enquiry.**

The thesis accesses a developing mode of study where something other than theory is made. Its theorisation through accessible and creative contexts, through actions and practices is its investigation. A theoretical but also a practical and indeterminate sense of Cobra work and of Lefebvre's ideas is developed. In many ways its criteria is driven by the important and revealing dissonances of the written and the philosophical as against art or made constructs. Linking Cobra thought to Lefebvre speculates about the dissonances of the unresolved and lived through art events and practices of Cobra in relation to Lefebvre's meta-philosophy of the everyday. This includes Cobra events and situated collaborative practices, Lefebvre's meta-philosophy, fieldwork, and architecture. The limitations of a traditional aesthetic are questioned by it in terms of the inter-twinings of art and power, relations with others, or the particularities of environment and history. The strong reasons for thinking through these intractable dissonances in practices,

values and relational actions, and not just a critical enquiry, are central. Through Burgin and the psychoanalytic the thesis then examines the lived in ways that emphasise both problems of equivalence and a potential yielding of connections. **Burgin's ideas about Lefebvre are differentiated in terms of a different and non-resolveable theoretical paradigm about spatial and psychical realms, and of a realm that attempts to re-consider psychoanalytic modes of thought outside of its clinical context.**

Reconsidering a plurality of ideas about the fully lived has not yielded an equivalent of a political theory or an art history, though specific tensions can be highlighted. While a set of connections has been charted, concluding formulations in broad methodological terms are not possible. A tentative re-creative frame for a spectrum of activity from collective artwork to cultural activism, from artwork to psychoanalysis, cannot be articulated within the terms of the PhD, as the equivalences across territories simply do not neatly join. In psychoanalytic cases a clinical frame contests it; in artwork or in the dimensional and reflexive different levels of connections reconstitute it. There are chasms and irreconcilable tensions between political theory and art writing. The purpose of the thesis was to address the problems of the fully lived moment in thought and action, yet this purpose as such could not be fully realised (even though the thesis attempted to do so) and part of its development was this negative realisation.

How to re-consider a contemporary field of enquiry about the lived, given an investigation of Lefebvre, Cobra and problems of equivalence, then need to be pursued in a conclusion. A range of possible positions and practices can then be established. Despite problems some scope is found for the development of a cluster of proclivities in the lived that have creative, cultural and social relevance. These include embodied agency and dimensionality, alterity, relations with one another, and alternatives. This emphasises cultural and collective contexts rather than individual causes and objectifications; conditions and agencies rather than aesthetic responses. Although Cobra, Lefebvre, and problems of equivalence are brought together in ways that are unresolvable, and that mediate different levels of enquiry, to a certain extent a field of struggles over meanings of forms, individualities and social values emerge.

### **The different parts of the thesis and their conclusions**

#### **Cobra**

Cobra work offers an exciting and accessible mode of study. It brings together a wide set of thematic tensions and processes that can be explored in individual or in collaborative terms. Cobra work was exploratory and experimental, it was vivacious and spontaneous. The range of media was

diverse. This included painting, but also sculptures, calligraphy, film, furniture decoration, house painting, poetry and unconventional artworks in collaborations of pictures and poetry. It included a field of research and practice, new formal enquiries into particular conditions and traditions, the commonplace or folk art, for example. The particularities of history and the collaborative are important elements. Cobra's founding, together with its art historical and formal contexts, was drawn by the thinkers' and artists' interest in the values of art and of actions in experimental forms, and through art, of a nascent collaborative and cultural activism.

Dotremont wrote 'Cobra will seek in action itself how far the stable principles of experimentation can go.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly he re-published an article by Atlan in issue 6 of Cobra which concerns 'concrete action and immediate practice' as alternative arguments to realism and abstraction.'<sup>2</sup> Jorn writes: 'The current process of art is not a search for acclaim, admiration, being marvelled at like an elephant at the zoo, but (being) a tool capable of acting on the spectator. That is why art is action and not description.'<sup>3</sup> Furthermore he goes to write 'Where does the artist find the vitality he expresses? In nourishing himself on the life of nature and the human environment, sociability in the broadest (international) and the deepest (Local) sense.'<sup>4</sup>

Yet the breadth of Cobra developments were underlined and led by limitations of art practice, and by creative thought. These were not reduced to, or resolved by, for the most part at least, a political or cultural dogma. Cobra artists and thinkers were careful to push aside the limitations of social realism, though not of values and conditions. Dotremont's and Constant's validation of collective work as Cobra's main achievement, in distinction from its pictorial language or a primitivist aesthetic is significant.<sup>5</sup> As Birtwhistle writes 'they did stand together in refuting art historical judgements of the 1960s and 1970s that identified the most significant achievement of Cobra as its primitivist iconography and style of painting: the 'language of Cobra.'<sup>6</sup>

Certain collaborative values and dynamics are explored by Cobra. Bille in Cobra 7 'In the end, it is the evidence and power of the lived which pass into the brush, into the painter's colours, into the sculptor's medium...And to live a vision and to create it on the canvas are not two separate acts.'<sup>7</sup> Egill Jacobsen before Cobra's founding expressed 'his ideas on the relationship between art and society and on the situation of the creative individual in the bosom of collective history many times.' In the Linien exhibition catalogue of 1939 he wrote '...As artists, we will collaborate with those who work to make man happier and richer, materially and intellectually. We are not spectators, indifferent to invisible tragedies.'<sup>8</sup> A realm of creative protest also

emerged for some Cobra painters, Jorn and Constant in particular. It was not dogmatically defined, but as a facet of the fully lived brought together history through art.

Cobra's break away from the Surrealists was significant and its development of an expressionistic and materialistic idiom maintained an experimental and image-based aesthetic. They developed a meeting of an experimental aesthetic with connections across media, the written and the plastic, painting and sculpture - assemblages, masks for example. Yet Cobra thinkers and artists also fostered a meeting with the outside world, that turned away from an individualised and specialised aesthetic. Cobra's break with the Surrealists reconnected art with a cultural and socio-historical engagement and, for some, with politics in a way that was distinguished from the Surrealists. This was also what distinguished Cobra from the Dadaists.

It is however the relevance of tensions induced by Cobra reconstituting accepted patterns of differentiation within a traditional aesthetic that are integral to an understanding of the development of new forms. These are not resolved but they are accorded certain nuances and values – a plurality of connection and process. Cobra painting and a 3 dimensional enquiry can then also sit beside Cobra events, Cobra's collective work, research and practice, the investigation of traditions, and an engagement that does not displace

historical and cultural particularity. Cobra polemics and ideas are not treated as inherently separate domains to its practices. Cobra art is not interpreted only through its objectification, but in an experimental and developing set of relations, that included unconventional and collaborative artworks. It is in the de-stabilisation of pre-defined aesthetic categories and a holding of certain tensions within them that the scope for a plurality of experimental processes and practices in Cobra emerges. This, it is argued, is a vital element of Cobra's uniqueness and achievement.

In Cobra 6, the art of the town was contrasted with the art of the country where the socio-historical context was important. The terms of folk art were developed within an accessible aesthetic, but they were also socio-historical investigations. Constant's ideas empathised with a vehemently critical engagement with the outside world, while Dotremont explored in unresolved ways the dialectical material. One of Appel's murals was made for the Amsterdam Town Hall, inspired by a journey he made across Germany. Dotremont's interest in dialectical materialism, unconventional and collective artwork was shared and differed in uncertain ways from Constant outlook. Cobra languages were not resolved within the Group, or in subsequent Cobra studies. Yet the interplay of a cluster of ideas contribute in diverse ways to the experimental formulation of Cobra's practices - for example through



Jorn's or Corneille's interest in art and in cultural forms (for example visiting Tunisia), through collaborative artwork or events.

Through Gaston Bachelard the unfolding of imaginative acts and specifically material processes were explored. Bachelard's work and lectures were an important influence on Cobra artists.<sup>9</sup> Through unresolved dialectical material and lived contexts facets of Cobra were also experimenting in realms outside of a specifically individual aesthetic. An optimistic outlook about the future, collaborative enterprises, events, were questioning implicitly facets of an individual aesthetic, though not their individual contributions. Despite limitations, and differences of outlook within Cobra, theirs was not only a romantic or a non-European and primitive search for origins, nor only original formal languages. It was more than that. In original ways, it was an art-led exploration of contemporaneous and re-creative facets and conditions of art, within an experimental outlook of forms. The relevance of a host of new practices and problems emerge. This includes situated artwork, unconventional collaborative artwork, and cultural activism through art. It includes art and history or creative protest, and art and architecture.

Cobra work emerges from a traditional aesthetic though develops from and through cusps outside of a traditional aesthetic. An art historical understanding de-contextualises the breadth of specific elements of a Cobra

enquiry and of Cobra artwork. Rather than a primitivist objectification of Cobra artwork and sculpture, a plurality of lived and re-creative set of relations de-stabilises aesthetic categorisations. Cobra's fascination for the primitive was substantially different to that of Picasso's and to a primitivist iconography. Cobra were interested in their own pre-histories and looked to re-create what they learnt about those contexts into art work, traditions and new actualities in the present. This is replicated in the marginalisation of contesting ideas and histories within Cobra historiography through one of post-Cobra's trajectory in Italian ceramics, in art and architecture, and in the urban.<sup>10</sup> In historiographical terms a more diverse interpretation does not leave Cobra work only within art historical and formal junctures but also introduces Cobra as a pan-european contributor to strands of new developments in contemporary discourses. This would include original Cobra contributions to primitivism, visual culture, to art and cultural activism, and the everyday. It includes a methodological complexity and a cultural theoretical maturity that, in historical terms, is difficult to locate in an art historical and European canon.

There are strong reasons for extending Cobra investigations into the accessibility of art and its commonality, into a context and a concept of the everyday. The materials and ideas Cobra used explored everyday materials and objects – wood, bread, potatoes. Potatoes clearly were not being valued

for pictorial or sculptural reasons. The terms of folk art, children's art, and the anthropological, are effectively everyday forms of art – they are accessible and commonplace. The Dutch development of children's art in a contemporary field together with the Danes' search for the anthropological in pre-history are connected through the everyday and the lived present. Partly in connection with Lefebvre, although it is difficult to ascertain the influence of Lefebvre in Cobra historiography, the everyday framed a set of remarkably similar contexts, according to Lambert, directly influencing a Cobra exhibition.<sup>11</sup> In a contemporary everyday realm, it is argued, there are many points and values in common with facets of a Cobra field of enquiry. The everyday for example already does include a range of ideas about the Surrealists, Walter Benjamin, Lefebvre, and Anthropology.<sup>12</sup> It also does include a range of similar thematic and methodological tendencies in a meeting of art and cultural theory. A field of the everyday and cultural theory helps distinguish, though not resolves, an element of the Cobra oeuvre that cannot only be understood in terms of a traditional aesthetic.

In what has been called Cobra methods, a range of tendencies and practices were brought together and highlighted as an exemplary mode of creative thinking and productive connection through a cluster of concepts and ideas. Cobra's 'thinking vivacity' developed a set of experimental connections and ideas. Cobra spontaneity was also mediated and developed within processes

of practice that could also question some of the values of a traditional and individual aesthetic. Yet it was formalised and theorised. Its tendencies brought together the emotional or the spontaneous with understanding; a reasoned orientation with the imagination. A developing sense of its practices and research, and of their connections, is therefore important and its reasoned orientation with the imagination establishes a helpful set of co-ordinates. Jom's wariness of knowledge, for example, significantly complicated modes of understanding, and sets of productive tensions.

### **Lefebvre**

It is interesting that a picture of Lefebvre's radical romanticism and the development of specific themes and concepts - the everyday, lived moments, meta-philosophy, and architecture - can be charted relative to connections with artists and art groups. This does not define Lefebvre's project, but nonetheless it connects, and helps to understand it. Lefebvre's links with the Dadaists, Surrealists, Constant, and the early Situationists were demonstrable.<sup>13</sup> Links and differences build up a partial picture of Lefebvre's ideas, and the changing focus of his interests. For example these developed from moments to the everyday, to spaces, the rural and the urban, and then at the end of his career back again to the everyday. Reconsidering Lefebvre's ideas relative to vectors of thinking in art about the lived and in practical terms highlights areas of strengths and weaknesses in its reconsideration. By

focussing on the conceptualisation of ideas in relation to art movements rather than in his more abstract philosophical modes of enquiry, a practical gauge of his ideas can be distinguished.

Lefebvre and Cobra both shared an interest in, but were also highly critical of, the Surrealists in similar ways. Although Lefebvre and Cobra artists were not to meet, many of the terms of their critical stance towards the Surrealist do share important facets – they are both critical of the surrealist unconscious, and the surrealists' move away from politics. They both distinguish, for example, the relevance of an ordinary and everyday realm from an individual or traditional aesthetic, the relevance of values and new practices. A set of ideas can be located in a realm that is accessible to active constructs, everyday activities, and fieldwork - to existing conditions. The significance of materials, either as human raw material or artistic material is another link. It was not only two-dimensional, conceived or about philosophical ideals. Modes of understanding were complicated and investigated through its contexts and its practices. Its thinking was in some way unknown, and not only theorised but made in a dimensional, material and lived world.

One of post Cobra's realms consolidates the case for a set of thematic connections with Lefebvre. The IMIB raise the issue of the urban. In a pre-

Situationist moment, ideas about habitats, nascent architectures, art and architecture, are explored by Jorn and Constant.<sup>14</sup> Lefebvre is directly influenced by Constant's ideas in architecture.<sup>15</sup> Birtwhistle suggests a comparison of modes of study between Lefebvre and Jorn.<sup>16</sup> A few years after falling out with the Situationists Lefebvre claimed to have had a closer set of connections with Cobra, Constant and Jorn, than he did with the radical terms of the Situationists.<sup>17</sup> In a historical perspective and in the scope for a reconsidered contemporary perspective this inflects Lefebvre's ideas on everyday conditions, on lived moments, and on slow change in particular ways.

Cobra and Lefebvre approached similar themes in different ways. The everyday for Cobra was a more experimental and mutable field. It was distinguished by its own artistic and material terms. Though not always easily – what of Cobra and potatoes that are exhibited and then eaten? Unlike Cobra, Lefebvre was influenced by the Dadaists. Yet Cobra's everyday was a much more unresolved and theoretically problematic realm in contrast with Lefebvre's meta-philosophy of the everyday. The experimental inclusion of everyday materials, objects and artwork by Cobra was mediated through experimental processes.

Lefebvre in contrast focuses on architecture, the ordinariness of the lived moment and conditions of production. Lefebvre's case for lived moments and lived time develops out of a more ideologically driven search. Though in less ideological terms, Lefebvre investigates the rural and the urban, the everyday or a radical romanticism. But in many ways Lefebvre attempts meta-philosophical summations that look to abstract imperatives, for example about time, at the expense of practical insights and specific methodological problems. It is simply not clear for example what a rhythm analyst actually does. In a reconsideration of Lefebvre it is his more practical or situated work, rather than the abstract contexts, that becomes more relevant – The chapters in *Rhythmanalysis* 'Seen from the Window' and 'Mediterranean Cities' for example.<sup>18</sup>

Lefebvre's meta-philosophy engages with the outside world. He raises important questions that a traditional aesthetic would not. He gauges aspects of power and production. This re-orientates a traditional aesthetic into realms outside of the individual and into a plurality of relations. Lefebvre's reconsideration raises the centrality of dimensionality. It raises a host of ideas about creativity and society, lived values and choice, alternatives in the future. It is a critical social and political theory. Lefebvre's thought develops out of a different set of provenances to the art theoretical. It is not about a realm of art, signification, subjectivity, but production and praxis. It is about

the production of the everyday. It is about the production of the landscape and of the urban.<sup>19</sup> Yet it is also about representational practices, inscriptions in the landscape, and futures. It seeks to gauge in accessible ways the centrality of the dimensional world.

The chapter raised concerns about Lefebvre's thought. Lefebvre draws a line that separates off the relevance of an individual and romanticised aesthetic in art - though not of its impulses - as part of the problem. He contains poesis (creative practice) within a critical set of goals in social praxis that prescribes a methodological certainty and set of assumptions about individuality. To what extent is a mutable realm of practice, or the body, marginalised by this? To what extent is its realm thought before created? Creativity and individuality are raised as fundamentally important, while praxis highlights the conditions and forces of production in their terms. Yet the relative emphasis attributed to each realm, praxis over poesis in Lefebvres' case has significant implications. The fact, for example, that Lefebvre's social or ideological emphasis was unable to develop scope for different cultural and artistic contexts. It is interesting that Cobra's more experimental processes explored a far wider and more mutable range of ideas about culture and art than Lefebvre's. Furthermore Constant's polemics in Cobra are of their time (and specific to Constant) and a reconsideration of Lefebvre and Cobra



would need to take account of a range of art theoretical developments as well as intellectual currents.

However, a cautious consideration of Lefebvre's ideas needs to question in specific ways the extent to which it re-orientates or resolves in specific terms a set of relationships within contemporary discourse in art and within psychical realms. Lefebvre met with the Surrealists but was critical of the surreal unconscious and their separation of art from politics. He aligned himself with the Situationists but fell out with them in 1968. He worked with Constant and was indebted to his work. In broad terms a reconsideration of Lefebvre needs to examine to what extent problems of equivalence with realms in art and a material world can be thought through or separated out. Indeed how to think critically about potential fractures and strengths in Lefebvre's thought in a meeting with realms of artwork and the body, spatialities and psychical realms, visual cultures and architecture, becomes a question about guiding rationales.

### **Why reconsider Cobra and Lefebvre.**

The thesis then chose to examine the lived in a different way in order to fully consider a contemporary frame for Cobra or, for that matter, Lefebvre. The reconsideration of Lefebvre's thought is itself diverse - in post-modern geographies, visual culture, spatial studies, and politics to name a few. Some

contemporary art theoretical realms, as explored by Irit Rogoff and Rosalyn Deutsche, shed light on a range of tensions in art and geography, and art and spatial politics.<sup>20</sup> They make extensive though specific reference to Lefebvre. A concern about totalising aspects of theory, its capacity to marginalise differences, or for totalising theory to prescribe the development of its own thought is mentioned by both. Contemporary art theoretical realms, Rogoff's and Deutsche's at least, consistently highlight the necessity for caution about broad historical or theoretical assumptions. Methodological complexity, and aspects of art practise rather than theoretical uniformity is highlighted by Rogoff.

In two chapters in the same edited collection, 'Boys town' and 'Men and Space' Deutsche takes issue with post modern geography and historical materialism in the works of Ed Soja and David Harvey that have important implications for reconsiderations of Lefebvre's work.<sup>21</sup> Deutsche is critical of general theories of culture that somehow assume a pre-existent and neutral spatial field. In simple terms, Deutsche criticises Harvey's exclusive focus on a supposed pre-existent social reality that can be explained from a totalizing and historical-material perspective. Deutsche criticises Harvey's defence of a historical-material account against post-modern views. She challenges his criticism of post-modern concerns for difference, specificity, and anti-universalism that comply with a turning away from 'the real social world'.

Importantly, Deutsche suggests new social practices that define social theories rather than the other way around. Yet to what extent there is scope here for a critical or mutable dialogue with Lefebvre's thought within contemporary post-modern discourses of visual culture and spatial politics and what the limitations would be, remains unclear from the evidence of the texts.

The difficulties of bringing together different kinds of insight are raised by Rogoff's work in visual culture. She describes her thinking in terms of negotiated or situated thinking. This comes closest to the methods advocated by the thesis in a reconsideration of Cobra and Lefebvre. Some Cobra work was called situated collaborative work - in particular houses, Italian ceramics, the urban. Cobra methods examined a plurality of ideas, including the visual cultural. Rogoff writes visual culture questions 'objects of its enquiry and of its methodological processes.'<sup>22</sup> Rogoff calls it the unframing of discussions, from a set of conventional values, as either highly valued or outside of the scope of vision altogether. It is this kind of thinking that has affected a shift from the old logical-positivist world of cognition to a more contemporary arena of representational and of situated knowledges.'<sup>23</sup> There is an emphasis on a cultural political realm and a cultural politics emerges from the constitutive components of the study.

Cobra's search for origins looked to many different contexts. Yet Rogoff discusses experiences of belonging, or poignantly, unbelonging and unhomed geographies, almost as a constitutive method of critical thinking - 'To 'unbelong' and to 'not be at home' is the very condition of critical theoretical activity.'<sup>24</sup> Though she is careful to say that she does not think there is a place of absolute belonging - she problematises belonging itself. Lebas and Koffman's introduction to Lefebvre's 'Writing Cities' discuss a concept of transposition in Lefebvre's work - conceptually, it has some similarities with unbelonging although it is discussed within space *and* time in its own theoretical terms, some of which have been considered.<sup>25</sup> Rogoff articulates the significance of Lefebvre in her thinking 'that allows for a certain amount of interplay which extends beyond the binarism of material conditions versus psychic subjectivities as the determinants of place and its implications.'<sup>26</sup> She also references the work of Edward Said, Albert Camus, and Franz Fanon. While productive facets of a search for belonging is acknowledged as an aim or thematic horizon by Rogoff, so too are its limitations. How and where its limitations and values are mediated becomes crucial. For example in a simplified reflexive vein, it could be asked to what extent her realm of unbelonging is also an expanded psychical field informed by an identification with unbelonging? However art work becomes important in ways that look beyond binarisms of the material world and the subjective, the

individual and the social, though its practices and ideas are nonetheless informed by specific conditions and sets of values.

### **Recommendations arising from the study**

#### **Cobra, post Cobra, and Lefebvre**

It is in many ways important to bring Cobra studies, and its thematic perspectives, into a wider historical and contemporary art theoretical literature in English. It is also useful to make Cobra work accessible to art students. The Dadaists, Surrealists or Futurists dominate ideas about the avant-garde in art historical terms. Cobra is often mentioned in cultural theory as a pre-fix for the Situationists, although there are significant differences between them. The limitations of the Surrealists or Picasso's artwork are more often than not referred to in European contexts about the primitive and modern art, or modernism. This does not do justice to the Cobra group.

The particular terms of Cobra that point outside of a traditional and individual aesthetic were not resolved in Cobra. They are in some ways unresolved in historiographical debates about a Cobra language after Cobra. Paradoxically a reconsideration of a spectrum of Cobra work and ideas, in its unconventional artwork for example, also includes scope for a mutable realm of art where conditions are not primary – poetry and painting. In this sense a

realm of art and conditions is inconsequential and is defined by a formal enquiry. Yet finding an equivalent of Cobra's active, experimental or collaborative enquiry outside of a traditional aesthetic in current practice is fraught with difficulties. It would be interesting to reconsider elements of Cobra through the eyes of contemporary perspectives. This might include, as already mentioned, the everyday and cultural theory, as examined by Highmore. This magnification of a portion of the Cobra enquiry could be contrasted with other everyday realms. Similarly a contemporary visual cultural realm integrates a wide range of visual and cultural elements, Rogoff's for example, and would highlight interesting tensions outside an individual aesthetic within the Cobra enquiry.

The fragile and patchwork of connections between Cobra, Bachelard and Lefebvre are an interesting set of alliances. Birtwhistle's comparison of Lefebvre's work with Jorn's would be an interesting realm of further studies as would the art and anthropological dimensions of Jorn's research. Yet the mediations and productive tensions between Cobra, Bachelard, and Lefebvre, in thematic and material terms constitute an interesting basis for further thought.

**The thesis brought together, through Burgin, facets of the psychoanalytic and Lefebvre which necessitated a following through of**

its contexts. However the thesis was thereby unable to reconsider the implications, and the problems, of bringing together the psychoanalytic with Cobra, or Bachelard. A few marginal historical insights and some specific psychoanalytic contexts of thought about Cobra, could be made, in addition, more broadly, to a reconfigured field of visual culture.

In historical terms the psychoanalytic raises the links in the pre-Cobra group with a Danish psychologist, Sigurd Naesgaard. The placement of Naesgaard in psychoanalytic terms is of interest in that he was part of a psychoanalytic group in Norway to which Wilhelm Reich also belonged (which caused problems in the group). This group was rejected by the International Psychoanalytic Association (I.P.A.) though a Danish-Swedish group was accepted as a compromise. Birtwhistle also suggests, in a comparison of Jorn with Lefebvre, the names of Satre and the psychoanalyst, Reich. To this extent a psychoanalytic context would explore personalities and ideas around the Cobra group, rather than about the Cobra group itself.

A psychoanalytic enquiry about Cobra work in art historical terms would reveal the extent to which Cobra defines itself by moving away from individual psychical or Surreal realms to material, cultural, or collaborative realms of enquiry. In this sense bringing Cobra and

psychoanalytic enquiries of art together simply serves to highlight the significant limitations of striving to find psychological insights or psychoanalytic frameworks from specific Cobra art works. However, Cobra was not only an acronym but it was also a snake. A psychoanalytic enquiry could consider the different aspects of a Cobra enquiry and its significance for the nature of the snake as the phallus. In its phallic aspects, it could be asked for example to what extent might a realm of the maternal or the paternal, be considered, differentiated, or undifferentiated in the works of Cobra. The contesting thematic emphases in Cobra work and the psychoanalytic re-contextualise, though not necessarily resolve, a different set of problems to those from Cobra's collaborative or cultural realms. In reductive terms it asks what are the strengths and weaknesses of a realm that brings together social dimensions and values with the psychical and psychoanalytic? And what of individual formal insights? The specific differentiation, forms and objects of those problems, and insights, would then also be of interest.

The psychoanalytic could also explore some broad theoretical tensions and distinctions about psychological or chimerical realms of the child with anthropological, Bachelardian, or critical realms of enquiry. Bachelard, for example, was influenced by psychoanalysis and science and by the psychologist, Piaget. Differentiating Bachelard's emphasis on



**an idealised super-ego (and his later criticality of psychoanalysis) with that of a Freudian super-ego could be explored in different ways. Furthermore, a psychoanalytic emphasis would highlight a set of productive tensions for thinking through Bachelardian aspects of inside and outside space with a reflexive, embodied or psychological-based enquiry.**

Finally, contemporary ideas about spaces and architectures, Ian Borden's for example, re-consider Lefebvre's notions of space, through accessible modes of practice.<sup>27</sup> Borden, Rendell, and et al bring together ideas from many different fields, but its articulation through art, architecture and gender highlights a specific range of tensions and practices.<sup>28</sup> Constant is also referenced in it. Aspects of power and gender, disenfranchisement and creativity, the body and dimensionality, are discussed in ways that are accessible to practitioners. In many ways it makes available a wider range of differentiated concepts and practices and it focuses on the particularity of agencies and practices rather than Lefebvre's more fixed or theoretically-determined notions of praxis. A central focus of the study has examined tensions outside of a traditional aesthetic through artwork – where the object is mediated in more mutable and less certain terms. In this sense the fact that Lefebvre's work is not an equivalent with Jorn's and Constant's is important. Jorn remained an artist all his life. Yet the fracture of artwork and of the

author leaves open a space for the creative or unresolved mediation of spaces, architectures and histories. For example this re-orientates a realm where biography can be mixed with urban social history, architecture with writing, painting with history. Not prescribing an outside-aesthetic realm is central.

Lefebvre's ideas do not have equivalences in art but can be contrasted with the work of Jorn and Constant. Contrasting their work would yield interesting insights. In this sense Lefebvre's thought and values are not about art or post-modern discourse. And it is within a contemporary reconsideration of Lefebvre's thought, within some critical constraints of its enquiry, where other developments have taken place. The field of the architectural everyday and of the urban, for example owes some allegiance to Lefebvre.<sup>29</sup> The particularity of developing practices within existing conditions in the present constrains its utopian urges in important and accessible ways to practitioners. Indeed those collaborative goals and their values, will vary, and in many ways opens up a field of enquiry. Nonetheless the everyday works against theoretical summations, and refers to particular places, practices and people in the present.

### **Burgin and the lived**

The final chapter is more speculative and multi-layered. It deals with problems of equivalence with the fully lived and the interesting questions and

processes of mis-alignment that a specific reflexive and dimensional enquiry raises. Rather than discounting problems of equivalence and interesting mis-alignments in the fully lived, the chapter examines them - that is how concepts might make the journey from the psychoanalytic to the marketplace, for example the relevance of drives and identifications is a focus. Psychoanalytic processes of mis-alignment with the lived as well as mediated and dimensional perspectives that might yield connections with the lived are considered at the same time. The chapter about the psychoanalytic then cuts both ways, into problems of equivalence in individual psychological insight and to possible connections with mutable relational realms in social relationships, object relations, and a dimensional field. In this latter sense concepts are examined that complicate reductions to internal and external or binary divisions.

Given an emphasis on the lived and art, Victor Burgin's work in *In/different Spaces* raises many questions simultaneously about realms outside of a traditional aesthetic that are not resolved, or clarified, for the thesis.<sup>30</sup> For example what is the specific conceptualisation or differentiation of concepts and values about the lived within art theoretical contexts? How would this affect or challenge a contemporary thematic placement of Cobra and Lefebvre in contemporary discourse? Deutsche's insights into historical material accounts marginalising representational realms in art theory outlines

an important fracture or set of tensions with social and cultural theories. Rogoff sounds a note of caution and limitation about a methodological singularity, as does Deutsche about a tendency for theoretical accounts to marginalise representational insights in art. How two-dimensional realms in art think through contexts outside of a traditional aesthetic without displacing spaces and histories, and the strengths and weaknesses of their guiding rationales, introduces the relevance of Victor Burgin and his re-consideration of Lefebvre and of psychoanalysis. Yet centrally the thesis is left with a conundrum. To what extent does Burgin's re-contextualised enquiry then fully address the range of ideas about the lived by Lefebvre, or by the psychoanalytic, given his references to them?

The chapter, to a certain extent, differentiates guiding rationales and nuances about the lived. It tracks the connecting up and separating out of claims from different guiding rationales in Burgin, psychoanalysis and Lefebvre. **Burgin's work is methodologically complex because it re-contextualises the psychoanalytic and the Lefebvrian and brings together the psychical and the spatial.** Inevitably however, in terms of a reconsideration of Lefebvre (delete -despite extensive references to Lefebvre's ideas), Burgin marginalises a significant portion of Lefebvre's writing. **For example, Burgin's set of emphases do not consider differentiated layers in contemporary discourses such as the everyday and cultural theory that**

also refer to Lefebvre and an art historical field. However it is argued that both operate, with specific strengths and weaknesses in a non-resolveable field outside of a traditional aesthetic. In the discursive terms of cross-methodological enquiry, the chapter also found that Burgin's suggested development of Lacan and Lefebvre became a much more complex process, owing to Lefebvre's own limited and discursive development of Lacan and of alterity. Blum and Nast were critical of Lefebvre's theorisation of space through his reductive configuration of alterity and women's agency and they claimed that it was the Lacanian facets of Lefebvre's thought that were problematic. They found it was the extrapolated concepts of embodied agency, alterities, dimensionality, and produced difference, in a refined understanding of Lefebvre that emerge as important.

Furthermore Burgin also synthesises the psychoanalytic into a Lacanian and spatial field. Re-considering Burgin's synthetic psychoanalytic realm also highlights the importance of differences within the psychoanalytic community that have important consequences for considering specific concepts - the mirror for example, or a differentiation of material and psychical worlds. **The chapter thereby highlighted an additional set of problems by separating out specific concepts and differences between psychoanalytic schools.** Yet the meeting or merging of different guiding

rationales in the psychoanalytic, Lefebvre, and Burgin are found to be irreconcilable and non-resolveable in many interesting and productive ways.

The chapter introduced a few primary psychoanalytic concepts – about objects, identifications, and drives. Yet at the same time their understanding and development within psychoanalytic schools needed to be introduced. This came to include, broadly speaking, realms that were specific to the ego, id, and super-ego in the individual, that were object specific and related to internal and external realms, or that were linked to social ties and external contexts. Each concept or theory pushed and pulled in different directions, and could not be reduced into a comprehensive totality. There were important tensions in individual and relational conceptualisations. These serve to highlight the importance of problems of equivalence both in individual psychological terms but also in the value of mediations of cross-methodological connections. Nonetheless a frame was introduced to underline how relational realms with objects, spaces, and social ties, and concepts of change, in the psychoanalytic are also relevant.

Victor Burgin's work highlights complex connections in the spatial and the psychical. In many ways his work refers to art movements or theorists that have also been connected up with outside-aesthetic realms - the Surrealists, Benjamin, Lefebvre. Yet after thinking through some of the developing

languages and concepts in Cobra and Lefebvre in the previous chapters, Burgin's (delete - suggested developments about Lefebvre do not add up) **ideas complicate in specific ways dimensional fields, realms of equivalences, and spatial and psychical realms. For example Burgin's suggested developments of Lefebvre** (delete - This refers, in particular..) reveal how an art theoretical realm can move away from a set of important concepts in Lefebvre's work but that can still consider important realms outside of a traditional aesthetic. (Delete...For example, a two-dimensional or pictorial realm can impinge upon other art theoretical and lived realms and values...) **Within a context of non-resolveability in Lefebvre and Burgin, differentiating or mapping the strengths and weaknesses of concepts and guiding rationales outside of a traditional aesthetic, and not at the cost of one another, become centrally important.** For example the concepts that cannot be marginalised in a reconsideration of Lefebvre are found in embodied agency, dimensionality, and produced difference.<sup>31</sup> The lived or the ordinary moment in a reconsideration of Lefebvre is different to Burgin's development of them. **Conversely in a re-contextualisation of Lefebvre, Burgin introduces the importance of the body, of representations and of psychical realms. Their distinction is therefore important.**

(Delete and move remaining paragraph earlier- The chapter was critical of Burgin's synthetic psychoanalytic thought...).

### **Conclusions arising from Burgin and the Psychoanalytic**

Significant value was gained from a process of differentiation, of thinking through the strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical paradigms. (delete) - what the lived was not). Productive tensions and near connections were highlighted in ways that were not predictable. Arguably, one of the strengths of pursuing a cross-methodological enquiry is not its resolution but the fragmentation, or differentiation, of its parts. Even though Lefebvre and psychoanalysis did not share facets in common, charting near connections was valuable for constituting experimental realms of thinking and art practice about material and psychical realms and about the potential workings of identification in the dimensional world. (Delete - It found Burgin's attempted theoretical synthesis despite its complexity and given his claims, merges the particularity of thinking and differences in psychoanalysis and in Lefebvre).

The importance of realms outside of the individual in object relations was raised. That is, in objects, potential and transitional spaces, and aspects of relationality. Some scope was found for considering these specific themes and their connections, although they still did not meet. Attempts to extend object relations into a general cultural enquiry were also found to be limited in important ways - object relation's exclusive emphasis on the mother, for example. However the psychoanalytic investigation cut both ways, as not



only were potential connections explored but so too were fractures and problems of equivalence with lived or material realms that could be examined in further work.

Burgin explores some ideas about hybridity that are Freudian in interesting ways. Yet Freud's thought was found to be distinguished in its own important ways. Burgin's reference to ego-ideals, for example, through group identification could also be examined through the Freudian in other ways – in terms of an individual ego-ideal, a paternal ego-ideal and its associated ideas. This might include notions of repetition and fear, trauma or reparation. It includes an exploration of the terms of an embodied father and of aggressive drives, rather than only the sexual drives. The chapter's own focus on mis-alignments, in some measure, opens up a realm of specific practices and concepts that fracture the lived as a separate dimensional world in this way. The central point is that a reflexive field of unresolved tensions in object relations and in Freudian theory can significantly complicate problems of equivalence and identification in the lived in different ways to Burgin's Lacanian or for that matter, Lefebvre's dimensional insights. Nonetheless, it is the scope for the differentiation of guiding rationales and of their claims that have been highlighted. (Delete - Although problems remain, questions in contemporary discourses outside of a traditional aesthetic cannot be reduced

to Burgin's realm in 'In/different Spaces' and his references to Lefebvre and Lacan).

Object Relations look to objects, people, and the inter-personal world. It produces a different slant to Burgin's Lacanian outlook, and to a certain extent, to Freudian thought which, in simple terms, ultimately separates out material and psychological realms. A field of object relations has come to include a breadth of ideas about social relations, artworks, and potential spaces. A number of concepts might be explored further that connect up with an outside-aesthetic or the cross-disciplinary. Winnicott writes about transitional objects, creativity, and potential space.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, in a more Freudian vein perhaps, Winnicott also discusses inside/outside in a physiological rather than an environmental emphasis, in terms of skin, for example. However, Winnicott also highlights the importance of not reducing contexts to the psychoanalytic, although a psychological knowledge is implicit, and he holds out scope for play and for cultural realms. In an environmental emphasis the possibility of developing particular practices for particular contexts and experimental work emerges. What these might be, and how their values might differ or reconsider existing practices, or produce new particular ones, is an interesting question.

In simple terms Object Relations appears less separate from material or relational realms than the Freudian stress on personality, even though in many ways it is linked with the Freudian. Object Relations highlights relations with one another rather than for example aspects of psychological endurance, loss or intra-psychic conflict. Important fractures nonetheless remain within object relations, and between object relations and the Freudian, that are not only clinical nor only about emphases on the mother or father, but also come to underlie important philosophical differences and absolute claims about individual and social models. Greenberg and Mitchell summarise the importance of tensions within object relations as ‘... it is neither useful nor appropriate to question whether either drive structure or relational structure models are right or wrong. It is the rich interplay between these visions that will generate creative dialogue.’<sup>33</sup> The psychoanalytic does not produce contexts of thought for thinking through socio-political, cultural, or representational realms. A fractured conclusion would then also give scope to the relevance of exploring ideas and artwork about mis-alignments in their own graduated and particular productive contexts or identifications.

### **Conclusion**

The thesis has steered a course through a number of intractable tensions and, ultimately, non-resolveable contexts about the lived. It is cautious about the scope of its claims and its field is not resolved in a synthesis. This would be

to replace art's strengths of particularity, its reflexive and critical differentiation of productive tensions, and the development of many contemporary art and critical realms since Cobra in a resolved and resolvable theory. The fully lived does not fit with philosophical or ideological ideals. Ideas and practices about lived time are explored as elusive and fragmentary. They are formative and mutable horizon-questions, not absolutes, which are mediated in particular contexts, art works, and aspects of thought and experience in limited and accessible ways. They are questions that can be explored within a range of disparate and valid methodologies.

Nonetheless, sets of possibilities are opened up and the thesis does not seek closure about them. In Cobra, Lefebvre, and some facets of the psychoanalytic different ideas about human agency and fully lived moments are developed. Essentially the thesis configures realms that bring together the value of ideas, artworks and agencies in dimensional fields outside of an individual and traditional aesthetic. While fundamental problems of equivalence and near connections have also been highlighted in the final chapter, the question nonetheless remains, in terms of the starting point of the thesis, what of the values and contexts of Cobra-Lefebvre? How can the relative values of different methodologies be weighed up?

The simple answer is that certain ideas (and certain problems) can be separated out about the lived. Their inter-play fine-tunes a set of intractable problems that reference realms outside of a traditional aesthetic. A guiding rationale can define historically and thematically its location and to a significant extent its differentiation. A productive and creative field of actions and alterities, contexts and values, holds its own about the lived. The intractability of the lived is an important frame for a specific guiding rationale that highlights dimensionality but also alterity and that works against totalising theories. More broadly, the non-resolveability of the lived in a field of other guiding rationales means that a Cobra-Lefebvre axis is fundamentally important for that reason. Because of an elusiveness of the lived, the contexts of Cobra-Lefebvre are important. They are realms that are produced in a contested arena. Despite problems of equivalence across methodologies and disciplines, different proclivities - and problems - about the lived remain.

Lefebvre, Cobra, and resonances in the psychoanalytic bring together a plurality of productive tensions. In Cobra its aims may be highly accessible and spontaneous – creative events and experimentation with art forms, creative methods, and situated practices. In Lefebvre, the everyday, architectures, and the dimensional world that is not only about the studio or the individual are central. Facets of the psychoanalytic highlight the

environment and social relations. Their connections, and limitations, hold out some scope for significant complexity in art practice and theory. Individual judgement and the particularity of the art-work or project clearly are crucial. Nonetheless its contexts contribute the appropriate identification and theorisation, in creative and collaborative ways, for the configurations of the fully lived moment that can be carefully explored, developed and re-considered.

Three research questions and, to a certain extent, modes of study can be identified. The nature of the connections between them leaves a dilemma though there is not necessarily a demand for one choice to be made at the expense of the other. They may be presented as chaismas. After all, the mediation of productive tensions and polyvalent readings has been an important theme in the thesis. In some ways, each set of claims is established differently. First, a realm of Lefebvre and re-creativity establishes the dimensional field and fieldwork that looks to specific practises. Collaborative aspects of the architectural everyday and the production of the landscape - both rural and the urban - fit into its research field. How might the question and values of good-enough environments be explored in ways that can be offered up as practical alternatives and habits, or as new traditions? The fully lived becomes a better place to get to. Aspects of social justice and the psychoanalytic may be included in this field.

Cobra and Lefebvre bring together in ways that are unresolved a field of art and the everyday, art and a field of dimensionality. Aspects of collaborative or situated practises reconfigure the emphases and object of a traditional aesthetic. Yet how, for example, is the question of the author mediated or re-contextualised in creative and dimensional contexts? The disruption of traditional aesthetic categories develops creative and mutable re-orientations in its own collaborative, formal, or thematic terms. Yet Cobra artists were also painters as well as exploring collaborative and situated practices, and visual cultural research, although it was not clear how they co-existed. An emphasis on dimensional and outside aesthetic realms can point to specific facets of cultural, material or collective history while creative and imaginative sets of individual responses complicates it. What then are the strengths and the weaknesses of this set of ideas, and its assumptions, that to a certain extent imbricate art in society, and what scope is there for the artist to create his or her own formal history?

Finally, a research field, in an art-led enquiry identifies problems of equivalence and mis-alignment. Its guiding rationale emphasises the reflexive and the imaginative in the individual. It stresses more of a psychological essentialism and ingrained aspects of otherness. It might include facets of mediated psychical and dimensional realms. It might

include a careful reading of the value of aspirations.<sup>34</sup> Essentially however it highlights conflict in the individual or identifications that, in Freudian terms, are cautious of demands for equivalence in external and reparative realms or cautious of the super-ego and its demands. Do these ideas then constitute a case for separating off an individual's set of imaginative or psychological insights in art work or do they re-configure social realms, the value-laden and the creative in an experimental inter-play of factors? What are its implications? Either way, despite important differences and problems that it implies, the fully lived generates scope for further reflexive investigations. In this sense the profound complexities of a reflexive realm and of identifications is highlighted.



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## **Conclusion**

<sup>1</sup> Page 26, Lambert, J-C (1983) *Cobra*, Sotheby Publications.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* page 161.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid* page 79.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid* page 79.

<sup>5</sup> See Birtwhistle, G in the Dutch art historical magazine, *Jong Holland* vol 4, no 5, 1988, pages 39-40 for English summary.

<sup>6</sup> *Cobra* (2003) exhibition catalogue, page 28. Birtwhistle says the notion of Cobra as a pictorial language was introduced in 1974 by Art historian, Willemijn Stokvis. See also note 29, page 30 in *Cobra* (2003).

<sup>7</sup> Lambert (1983) page 59.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* page 57.

<sup>9</sup> See Stokvis (2004) *Cobra: The Last Avant-Garde Movement of the Twentieth Century*. Lund Humphries. page 146, Williamson, A (1982) *Cobra 1948-51*, Phd dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, or section in Chapter 1 of my thesis Bachelard and experimental materialism for other references.

<sup>10</sup> See Birtwhistle, G in *Jong Holland*, pages 39-40 referring to collective work in Italy where Appel, Corneille, Constant and Jorn worked together, the IMIB, and to international events.

<sup>11</sup> Lambert (1983) page 20. 'In the formation of a Cobra spirit, the influence of Henri Lefebvre and his Book *Critique de la Vie Quotidienne* was as determinant as that of Bachelard.' Stokvis criticised the book, though does not mention Lefebvre in her 2004 history.

<sup>12</sup> See Highmore, B (2002) *Everyday life and Cultural Theory. An Introduction*. London and New York, Routledge and Highmore, B (2000) *Everyday Life Reader*. London and New York, Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> About the Dadaists and Surrealists see Chapter 5 in Shields, R (1999) *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle*, Routledge, London and New York.

<sup>14</sup> About Constant see Wigley, M (1998) *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire*, Witte de With, Centre for contemporary art / 010 publishers, Rotterdam. About Jorn see Atkins, G with the help of Troels Andersen (1977) *Asger Jorn: The Crucial Years 1954-64*, Lund Humphries, London.

<sup>15</sup> Kofman, E and Lebas, E 'Recovery and Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J and Sadler, S (ed) (2000) *'Non-Plan Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism'* Architectural Press.

<sup>16</sup> Page 41, Birtwhistle says about Jorn 'certain of his perspectives and themes invite comparison with those of men like Wilhelm Reich, Satre, and Henri Lefebvre' in Birtwhistle, Graham (1986) *Living Art: Asger Jorn's comprehensive theory of art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946-1949)*, Reflex, Utrecht.

<sup>17</sup> See Interview with Ross, K in *October* no. 97, 1997, pp 69-83 'Lefebvre and the Situationists: an interview.' Also accessible on web-site: <http://www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html> where Lefebvre refers to Cobra, Constant and Jorn.

<sup>18</sup> Lefebvre, H ([1992]2004) *Rhythmanalysis, space, time and everyday life*, Translated by Elden, S, and Gerald Moore, Continuum, London and New York, chapters 3 and 8 'Attempts at the Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities.'

<sup>19</sup> See for example Elden, S (2004) *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*, Continuum, London and New York.

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- <sup>20</sup> Deutsche, R. (1998) *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London England. Rogoff, I (2000) *terra infirma: geography's visual culture*. Routledge, London and New York.
- <sup>21</sup> Deutsche, R. (1998)
- <sup>22</sup> Rogoff (2000) page 16.
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid* page 31.
- <sup>24</sup> *ibid* page 18.
- <sup>25</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996), *Writings on Cities*. Translated and edited by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, Blackwell Publishing; Oxford, UK and Cambridge Massachusetts, USA, pages 3-63
- <sup>26</sup> Rogoff, I. (2000), pages 14 and 16.
- <sup>27</sup> Borden I, Kerr J, and Pivaro A, (2000) *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press.
- <sup>28</sup> Rendell J, Penner B, and Borden I, (eds), (2000), *Gender Space and Architecture: An interdisciplinary introduction*, Routledge, London and New York.
- <sup>29</sup> See Harris, S. and Berke (eds), (1997), *Architecture of the Everyday*, New York; Princeton Architectural press or Miles, M (2000) *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday*, John Wiley and Sons.
- <sup>30</sup> Burgin, V. (1996), *In/Different Spaces: Place and memory in Visual Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.
- <sup>31</sup> Blum, V. and Nast, H. 1996. 'Where's the Difference? The heterosexualisation of alterity in Henri Lefebvre and Jacques Lacan.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14 (4), 559-80.
- <sup>32</sup> Winnicott, D,W (1971) *Playing and Reality*, Routledge, London and New York.
- <sup>33</sup> Page 404, and 408, in Greenberg, J.R. and Mitchell, S.A. (1983), *Object relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England.
- <sup>34</sup> See Phillips, A. (2005), *Going Sane*; Hamish Hamilton.

## **Literary Survey**

The Literary Survey puts together clusters of books in a way that a bibliography does not. It also comments on the range of available literature, important works, and the limitations of translated material.

## **Cobra**

Willemijn Stokvis writes extensively about Cobra artwork with an emphasis on pictorial and art historical links. *Cobra: An International Movement in Art after the Second World War*, is a well illustrated work, and has a copy of Constant's manifesto in it. To some extent, it reflects Stokvis' early interests in Cobra's pictorial and formal languages. In a later work, *Cobra 3 dimensions: Work in wood, clay, metal, stone, plaster, waste, polyester, bread, ceramics*, Stokvis broadens out in interesting ways Cobra history and its pictorial languages to include significant sculptural and three dimensional work. Her most recent and wide-ranging book (2004) is *Cobra: The Last Avant-garde Movement of the Twentieth Century* and includes references to the ideas of Gaston Bachelard. For a lively understanding of the Cobra group, its artwork and thinking vivacity, Lambert's book *Cobra* is insightful. It references links to Bachelard and to Lefebvre, and it discusses the Cobra journals. It also has the most comprehensive list of appendices about Cobra

artists. Stokvis however was critical of Lambert's book, stating it highlighted the case of Cobra artist, Dotremont.

The exhibition catalogue by Shield, P and Birtwhistle et al, (2003) *COBRA: Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam*, National Touring Exhibitions, Hayward Gallery Publishing, is the result of the first wide ranging exhibition of Cobra work in the UK. Birtwhistle questions to what extent Cobra work can only be reduced to a pictorial language. There are articles about Cobra by Graham Birtwhistle and Peter Shield that examine, for example, facets of Jorn's and Constant's thinking that reach outside of a traditional aesthetic. Birtwhistle also considers how Cobra's work was not only reducible to a primitive aesthetic.

Birtwhistle points out the significance of differences of opinion in a historiography of Cobra. An English summary of the article can be found at the end of the article in the Dutch art historical magazine, *Jong Holland*, volume 4, no 5, 1988, page 39-40. He traces the differences and developments of opinion about Cobra history between Cobra artists and Stokvis' first works about Cobra in the 1970s. Stokvis highlighted Cobra's pictorial language was the significant achievement of Cobra which was different to the claims made by Cobra artists Dotremont and Constant. This interpretation is compounded by Birtwhistle's 1988 article that highlights the

relevance of post-Cobra movements in art and architecture, ceramics, international events, and the urban. This strand of Cobra history, although mentioned in her history of Cobra as an avant-garde movement in reference to Jorn, is, it could be argued, marginalised in Stokvis' account of post-Cobra history. Although it is not immediately evident from the literature, a range of perspectives, starting points, and debates question Cobra's achievement and the formalisation of its different Cobra languages.

Birtwhistle has also written about J rn's early writings, i.e. pre-Cobra, in *Living Art: Asger Jorn's comprehensive theory of art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946-1949)*. It is useful for anthropological, architectural and methodological contexts of thinking that help to understand some of the simplifications and unresolved processes of Jorn's thinking before joining the Cobra group. Importantly in the book Birtwhistle mentions the possible comparison of Jorn with Lefebvre. He also mentions briefly the difficulties of attributing specific provenances of Jorn's thinking to Bachelard, though clearly does articulate that Jorn, and some members of Cobra, were influenced by Bachelard. Similarly Peter Shield has written about Asger Jorn in *Comparative Vandalism: Asger Jorn and the Artistic Attitude to Life*. Williamson's *Cobra 1948-51*, a PhD thesis, provided an interesting exploration of some of the range of art historical influences on Cobra art, and especially the unresolved connections to Bachelard. The best books about

Asger Jorn's art are by Atkins, G with the help of Troels Andersen published in 1968, 1977, and 1980 respectively *Jorn in Scandinavia 1930-53*, *Asger Jorn, The Crucial Years 1954-64*, and *Asger Jorn, The Final Years 1965-73*. A picture of Jorn and the post-Cobra years is introduced, though not in specifically post Cobra terms. There is a very comprehensive bibliography about Jorn's work and catalogue of his works in each.

Mark Wigley's book (1998) *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire*, is an excellent, well-illustrated book (from an exhibition of Constant's work) about Constant's architectural work, his utopian model of New Babylon, and his writings. There is also a bibliography of articles and books about Constant and reprints of his texts. It was helpful for understanding the mixture of provenances in the development of Constant's architecture, in its own terms, in a post Cobra and pre-Situationist period, and in the contexts of art and architecture rather than in any specific Situationist attributions of it, that are also important. Wigley for example highlights the relationship of Constant paintings and an art thinking in the development of his architecture. Simon Sadler's (1998) *The Situationist City* provides an interesting account of the contribution of artists to the early Situationists. Sadler links Lefebvre with Constant, with psycho-geography, and to architecture, and provides a good account of the kind of artwork produced. Kofman and Lebas in their article 'Recovery and

Reappropriation in Lefebvre and Constant' in Hughes, J. and Sadler, S. (ed) (2000), '*Non-Plan Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*,' compare the urban contexts of thinking in both Lefebvre and Constant. There is also an interesting interview by Ross with Lefebvre called *Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview*' published in *October* where he references the Cobra group, and his links with Constant.

### **Lefebvre**

Rob Shields '*Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: spatial dialectics*' is a wide-ranging introduction to Lefebvre's work. His work focuses on Lefebvre the dialectician, interpreted primarily through a spatial paradigm. Shields chapter about moments and Lefebvre's links with the Surrealists and Dadaists introduced the thesis' theme. There is also a comprehensive bibliography in it of all of Lefebvre's work. More recently published, *Understanding Lefebvre* in 2004 by Elden, provides an excellent interpretation of Lefebvre that is not only about space. It was also interesting that a Lefebvre scholar considered the relevance of a cautious reading of Lefebvre's writing about time. An excellent introduction to Lefebvre's writing, that was used extensively for considering links with the urban, the Nietzschean and the body, in Lefebvre's work, is *Writing on Cities*, by its translators, Lebas and Koffman.

The first third of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* laid the foundation for a set of links with vectors of thinking in art, especially about representational space. In turn this led to his older and more recent works about the Everyday as a theme. There are a series of volumes about the Everyday. The first published after the Second World War in 1947, is *Critique of everyday life* that is part of an occasional series with updated sections. There is also *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, introduction by Philp Wander. More recently there is *Rhythmanalysis: time, space, and the everyday*. Some of the more influential chapters for the thesis were 'Seen From a Window' or 'Attempt at the Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities,' are from *Rhythmanalysis* and are also translated in *Writing Cities*. *Rhythmanalysis* was Lefebvre's last work, and was considered part of the everyday series.

*Key Writings* (2003) is edited by Elden, S. Lebas, E. Kofman. It is an interesting selection of a range of translated works by Lefebvre. There are helpful introductions by the translators to each of the sections. Similarly *Introduction to Modernity, 12 Preludes September 1959 – May 1961* first published in 1962, is an eclectic and original book. It has a range of themes and writing styles. For example there is a story about Oedipus, a letter, a vision of Lefebvre's, an essay about irony, aesthetics, modernity, and a substantial chapter about New Romanticism. This last chapter was important for the thesis' consideration of Lefebvre's radical romanticism. Nonetheless



reading the primary sources of Lefebvre, together with the interpretations by Shields, Elden, Lebas and Kofman was the central focus.

Lefebvre's work has been influential in a number of different disciplines, and is interpreted into a number of contexts and camps. For example a post-modern geographical and urban field of literature has grown around Lefebvre's *Production of Space* and some of its themes. This includes the work of Ed Soja and David Harvey. Soja's work for instance emphasises a post-modern and socio-spatial interpretation. Soja's *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, has a helpful contextualisation of some debates about space and history. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, published in 1996 is dedicated to Lefebvre and has an introduction to Lefebvre's thinking in the *Production of Space*. *Postmetropolis. Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* published in 2000 has an unusual introductory chapter about archaeology and early settlements.

Lefebvre's theme of the everyday also situates him within a broader thematic context of the everyday and cultural theory with some interesting and important connections to art theory. Highmore's work on the everyday, *Everyday Life Reader* (2000), includes a chapter by Lefebvre, and, in *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* (2002), there is a chapter about Lefebvre

and the everyday. Highmore's work brings together subjects that range from Freud to Anthropology and Sociology to Surrealism. There are also many relevant sections about the everyday in Shields and Elden. Highmore also mentions the ideas of Walter Benjamin. Buckland Morse's *The Dialectics of Seeing* is, among other things, an excellent account of the significance of history and nature in Benjamin's work.

In connection to Lefebvre and contemporary discourses in art, a realm of spatial politics and visual culture can be identified. This includes the seminal set of essays by Rosalyn Deutsche's *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* that contests Harvey's reading of Dialectical Materialism, and has many important implications for the thesis about the problems of delineating realms of art and society. Her problematisation of a traditional art aesthetic and of dialectical materialism helped significantly to situate some of the difficulties of the thesis. Another interesting set of ideas is developed by Irit Rogoff, who attributes significance to Lefebvre, among others, in *Terra Infirma: Geographies Visual Culture*. Her visual cultural and cross methodological context, from art to belonging, psychoanalysis to feminism, is lucid and stimulating. There is also her chapter in the *Visual Cultural Reader* called 'Studying visual culture'.

Pile, S. (1996) *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* as the title suggests, brings together a number of complex contexts in original ways that allows for a mutability of thinking and that includes the psychoanalytic. He also compares the ideas of Lefebvre with Lacan, and he focuses on ideas about the body, space, and subjectivity with an emphasis on psychoanalysis and geography. However an article by Blum and Nast called 'Where's the Difference? The heterosexualisation of alterity in Henri Lefebvre and Jacques Lacan' articulated carefully the shared and different facets of thinking in Lefebvre and Lacan's work and the implications for a future consideration of Lefebvre's ideas in important ways. Sibley's cross-disciplinary and original work encompasses a field of geography and culture. In *Geographies of Exclusion* (1995) he discusses the relevance of otherness with cultural contexts, of space and place as constitutive, and he discusses ideas from psychoanalysis and social anthropology. Another interesting work is *Outsiders in Urban Societies* (1981).

There were a number of books about art, space and architecture that integrate a cross-disciplinary frame. *Gender, Space and Architecture* by Rendell et al, is an excellent introduction. Borden, Kerr, and Pivaro, (2000) *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, develops some concepts in this formative field and also makes reference to Lefebvre's ideas. Miles' *Art*,

*Space and the City*, bring together critically ideas and art practices in cityspaces. Sennett's work *The Conscience Of The Eye* makes links between city building and inside and outside space, power and culture.

A relatively new field of the Architectural Everyday, in some of its context draws on ideas by Lefebvre, especially about representational space. Harris and Berke (1997) *Architecture of the Everyday*, make extensive reference to Lefebvre, and attempt to transpose Lefebvre's ideas about representational space into an architectural and formative context. Similarly Miles' *The Uses of Decoration: Essays in the Architectural Everyday* develops a series of essays about the urban and the ecological. He also includes a chapter about Lefebvre. Ideas about alternative-led spaces and planning included Crouch and Ward, *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture*. Simon Fairlie, S (1996) *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside* takes a careful look at planning and environmental legislation and some alternatives in the context of sustainability.

### **Bachelard**

A useful introduction to a range of Bachelard's ideas can be found in Jones, M. *Gaston Bachelard, Subversive Humanist, Texts and Readings*. There are other works by Bachelard mostly translated by the Dallas institute. Apart from the 'Poetics of space' Bachelard's books published before or around the

same time as the Cobra Group 1948-51 have been highlighted in the thesis. In terms of Bachelard's work these focus on materiality and facets of a material imagination. Works include *Water and Dreams* (1942) and *Air and Dreams* (1943) as well as the two volumes *Earth and reveries of Will* (1947) and *Earth and Reveries of Repose*. In broad thematic terms Bachelard's work together with Lefebvre's developed an important frame for thinking about specific sets of productive tensions. In indirect ways for example Bachelard's chapter about the Dialectics of Inside and Outside in *Poetics of Space* might be contrasted with facets of Lefebvre and representational space in the *Production of Space*.

Given some of the interests of the Cobra Group, who had read Bachelard and Lefebvre, it is interesting to read about a few connections between Bachelard and Lefebvre. Although Lefebvre was to develop his own Rhythmanalysis, it was a term taken by Lefebvre from a work by Bachelard about time. Chapter 8 in Bachelard's *The Dialectic of Duration* is called Rhythmanalysis, and in Chapter 7 he refers to the Surrealists and Surrealist poetry as a good example of a temporal dialectic.

### **Psychoanalysis**

Victor Burgin's *In/Different Spaces* makes extensive reference to Lefebvre, psychoanalysis, and art movements. It was helpful for locating a relatively

contemporary art theoretical field that makes claims on the development of Lefebvre's ideas. Other works by Burgin include (1996b) *Some Cities*, and *The End of art theory: criticism and postmodernity*.

In terms of works about psychoanalysis, the field is diverse. For object relations, a thorough textbook is Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory*. It charts the similarities and the differences in object relations' schools. Texts by Freud are numerous. A good introductory text to a number of connections the chapter attempts to understand about objects, drives and identifications and their potential contexts and links and can be found in Section III of Freud's (1923) essay about the super-ego, in 'Ego and the Id'. However a broad range of Freud's work is included from the specifics of *On Sexuality* to the broader ranging contexts of *Civilisation and its Discontents*. *On Metapsychology* and *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* bring the focus back to individual psychology. Freud's work *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* helped in many ways to fathom something of Freud's final, albeit unfinished thoughts about psychoanalysis. His insights about the underlying complexity of human nature, its drives, and about the mutability of concepts, despite important and later criticisms of his work, have been important for determining a cautious outlook to the thesis. So too in many ways have ideas by Laplanche, Green, and Winnicott.

Laplanche, J in *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis* attempts to reformulate his reading of psychoanalysis and thereby suggests important scope for a reconsideration of some psychoanalytic contexts and its methodological frameworks - but also its difficulties. Winnicott's writing provides, in addition to paediatrics, scope for thinking that is not always reduced to the psychoanalytic. Winnicott seems also to have been fascinated by art in his work as a Doctor. *Therapeutic Consultations in Child Psychiatry* shows some of the application of squiggles and drawings. However more relevant to the thesis is *Playing and Reality* that highlights some of his key ideas, for example about transitional objects, playing, potential space, and the location of cultural experience. Winnicott's *Human Nature* brings together an overview of his ideas.

A Journal issue of *New Formations* introduces a helpful range of thinking about 'Psychoanalysis and Culture'. There are discussions about *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Feminist developments, Derrida and psychoanalysis, the influence of Winnicott, and an interview with psychoanalyst André Green, who has also written about Winnicott. In other contexts, attempts to develop a realm of art theory, culture and object relations have been examined though, despite interest, significant difficulties were found with its realm of thought. Although the works do not make up a school of thought, Richard Kuhns in *Psychoanalytic Theory of Art* considers the relevance of object

relations in culture and enactments. Peter Fuller in *Art and Psychoanalysis* incorporates ideas about art, psychoanalysis and dialectical materialism with specific reference to object relations. He also refers to a number of psychoanalysts who developed an interest in art, Marion Milner for example. *Psychoanalysis and Social Theory* by Ian Craib, is an interesting introduction to a meeting of the two disciplines, and he discusses Klein, Winnicott and Lacan among others. A series of bibliographies at the end of each chapter for further or introductory reading are helpful. *Psychoanalysis and Culture* by Minsky separates out facets of Freud, Lacan, Klein, and Winnicott, before considering psychoanalytic and cultural contexts. For a feminist and Freudian perspective see Mitchell, J in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. For a psychoanalytic perspective on sanity that considers the philosophical but also the value of aspirations towards a set of goals and realistic achievements, see Phillips *Going Sane*.



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